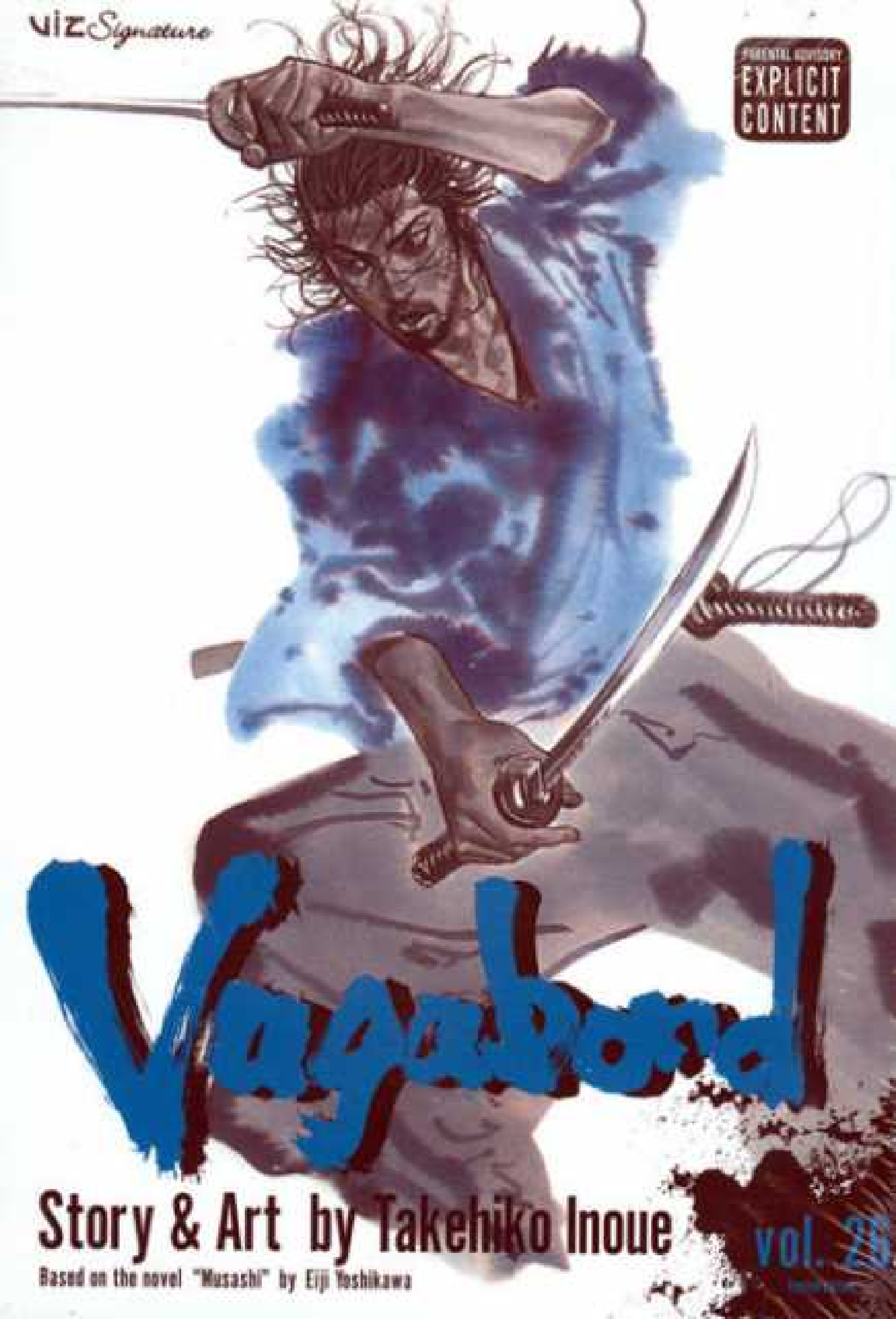
viz Signature

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT



Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 20

おそらくは、越えられぬ死線——。
なぜか武蔵は、無謀な戦に
足を踏み入れた。
戦いと呼ぶにはおぞましいほどの修羅場を、
武蔵が駆け抜ける!!

"VAGABOND" VOLUME 26.

Vagabond by Inoue Takehiko

バガボンド 26

井上雄彦

原作吉川英治「宮本武蔵」より

MORNING KC 講談社

モーニング
KC1612

バガボンド 26

井上雄彦

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VAGABOND BY INOUE TAKEHIKO

連載を始めて今年で9年。
9年描いて初めて書ける台詞があったことに気づく。
たった一言の台詞が含むものを過不足なく伝えるのには、
それだけの時間の積み重ねが必要だったみたいだ。
今回その台詞を書いたあとで気がついた。
どの台詞かは内緒。

井上雄彦

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Vagabond Vol. 26

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Vagabond

vol. 26

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

#225 Musashi Against Seventy Samurai

I CAME BACK...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

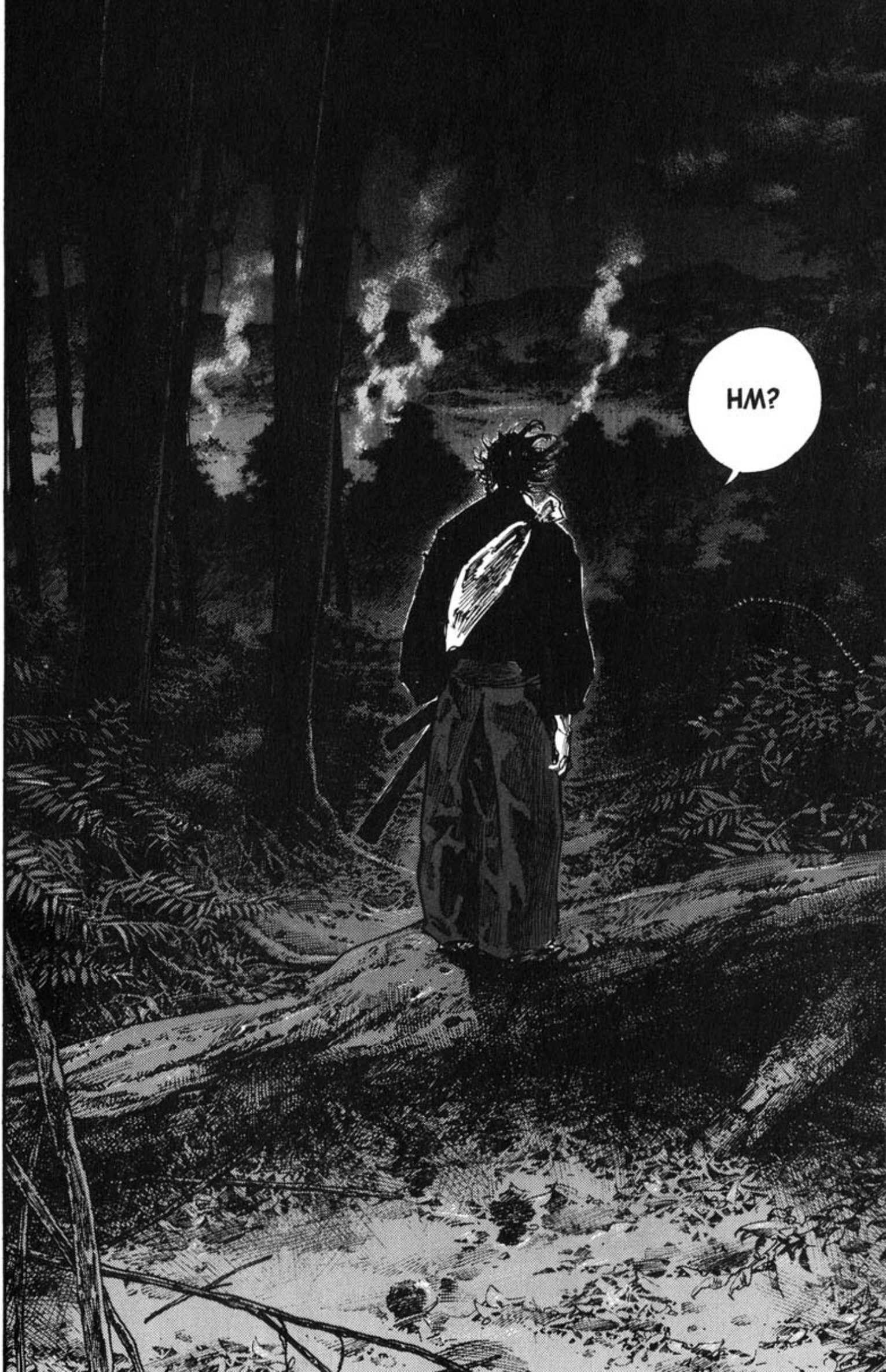
THIS SNOW COMING DOWN FEELS GOOD.
I WAS PLANNING TO TAKE THIS MOUNTAIN PASS OUT OF KYOTO...
I'VE COVERED QUITE SOME DISTANCE.
PLIP
PLIP

...

PLIP
PLIP

AN UNFOR-TUNATE FATE...
DID YOU SLIP...OR DID YOU DIVE IN?

...
FSSH
FSSH
AT LEAST NOW YOU CAN CONTINUE ALONG YOUR WAY DOWN-STREAM...
KRAK


HM?

THEY'VE ALREADY GATHERED. WE'LL HAVE AN EARLY START THEN...

HERE, KEEP THIS AT YOUR BREAST.

KRAKKL
KRAKKL

FWIP

GIVE ME ONE OF THOSE WARM STONES TOO!
ME TOO.
I DIDN'T GET ONE!

...
I NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO SPEAK TO SEIJŪRŌ SENSEI, BUT...

HEY, GIVE ME A SWIG!
AH...

WE'LL BE TOO STIFF TO FIGHT.
IT'S SO COLD. HAVE TO GET WARM FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

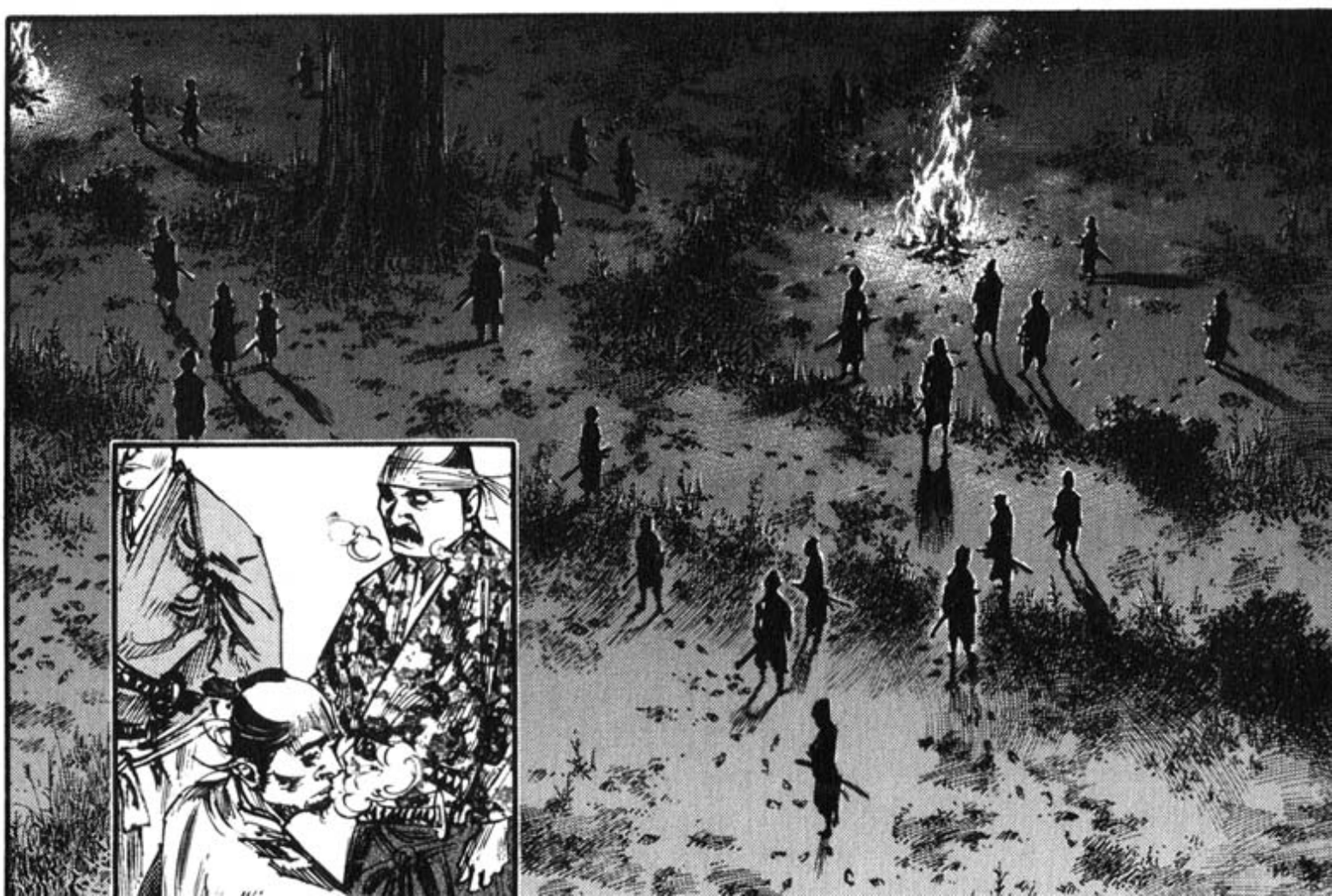
BRR...
I'M SHAKING.

HE TOOK MY HAND AND SHOWED ME EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANT.
HE TOLD ME TO TIGHTEN UP MY PINKY WHEN I GRIP THE SWORD.
...I DID ONCE TALK TO DENSHICHIRŌ SENSEI.
...
HE'LL BE TAKING THIS PATH, RIGHT?
ARE YOU SURE?
I'M GOING TO KILL MUSASHI.
NO, I'M GOING TO BE THE ONE.
BRRR...
I'LL GET HIM.

IT'S ALMOST TIME.

AND THIS IS THE ONLY WAY FROM THE TEMPLE.
HE WAS THERE LAST NIGHT AS WELL.
WE'VE CONFIRMED HE'S BEEN STAYING AT KONPUKUJI TEMPLE.

...



SACRIFICE ONE'S FLESH AND BLOCK WITH BONE.
THAT'S WHAT DENSHICHIRŌ SENSEI TRIED TO DO.
YES...
I'VE LIVED A LONG LIFE.
WOULDN'T YOU SAY, YOICHI?
IF THE 70 OF US ARE ACTING AS A SINGLE BODY...
I SUPPOSED YOU AND ME ARE THE SACRIFICIAL FLESH, EH?
YOU MUST BECOME THE BACKBONE OF THE YOSHIOKA.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
TAGAYA ...
KURAN-DO...
FUJIIE ...

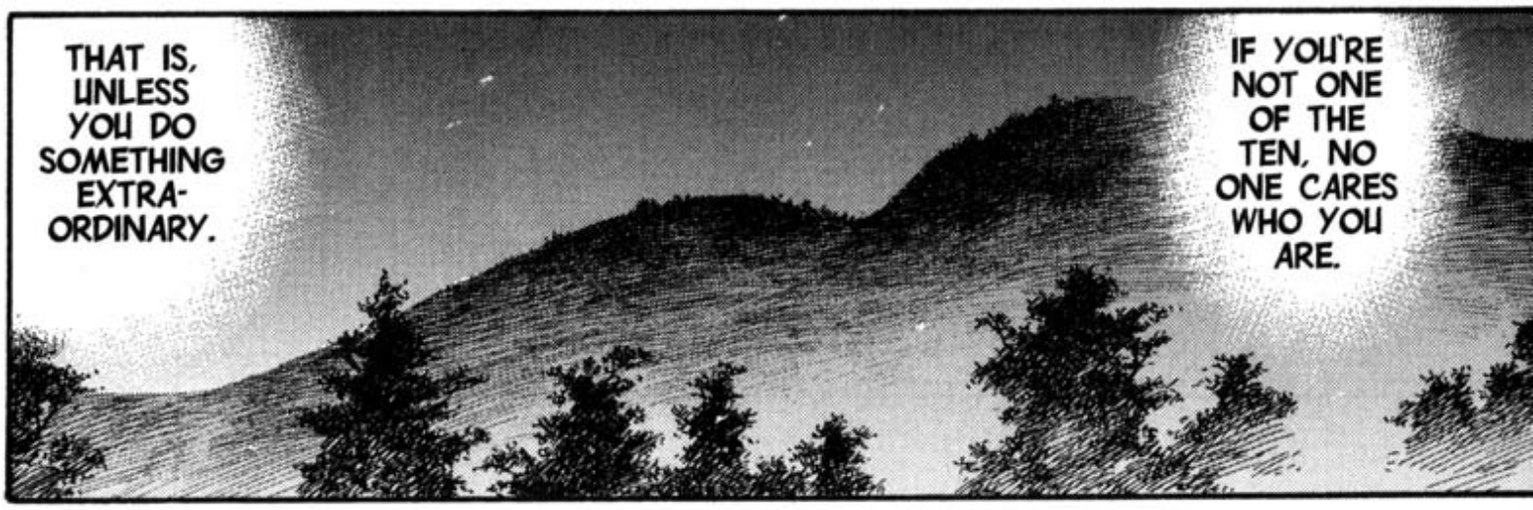
AND UEDA-- HE'S THE HEAD...
...AND THE SPIRIT...
YOICHI...
HORIKAWA ...
YES, THE SPIRIT OF THE YOSHIOKA.
PERHAPS HE ALWAYS HAS BEEN.

HYUU

...
UEDA SENSEI IS POSITIONED HERE IN THE CENTER ...
MUSASHI WON'T EVER MAKE IT IN THIS FAR.
SURELY I WON'T BE FACING MUSASHI TODAY IF I STAY HERE.

THEIR POSITIONS WERE ESTABLISHED, AND ANYONE WHO CAME LATER CAN NEVER JOIN THEIR RANKS.
NO MATTER HOW GOOD I GET, I'LL ALWAYS BE OVER-SHADOWED BY THEM.

IN A SENSE, IT'S ALL JUST A MATTER OF SENORITY.
THE TEN SWORDS-MEN OF THE YOSHIOKA.

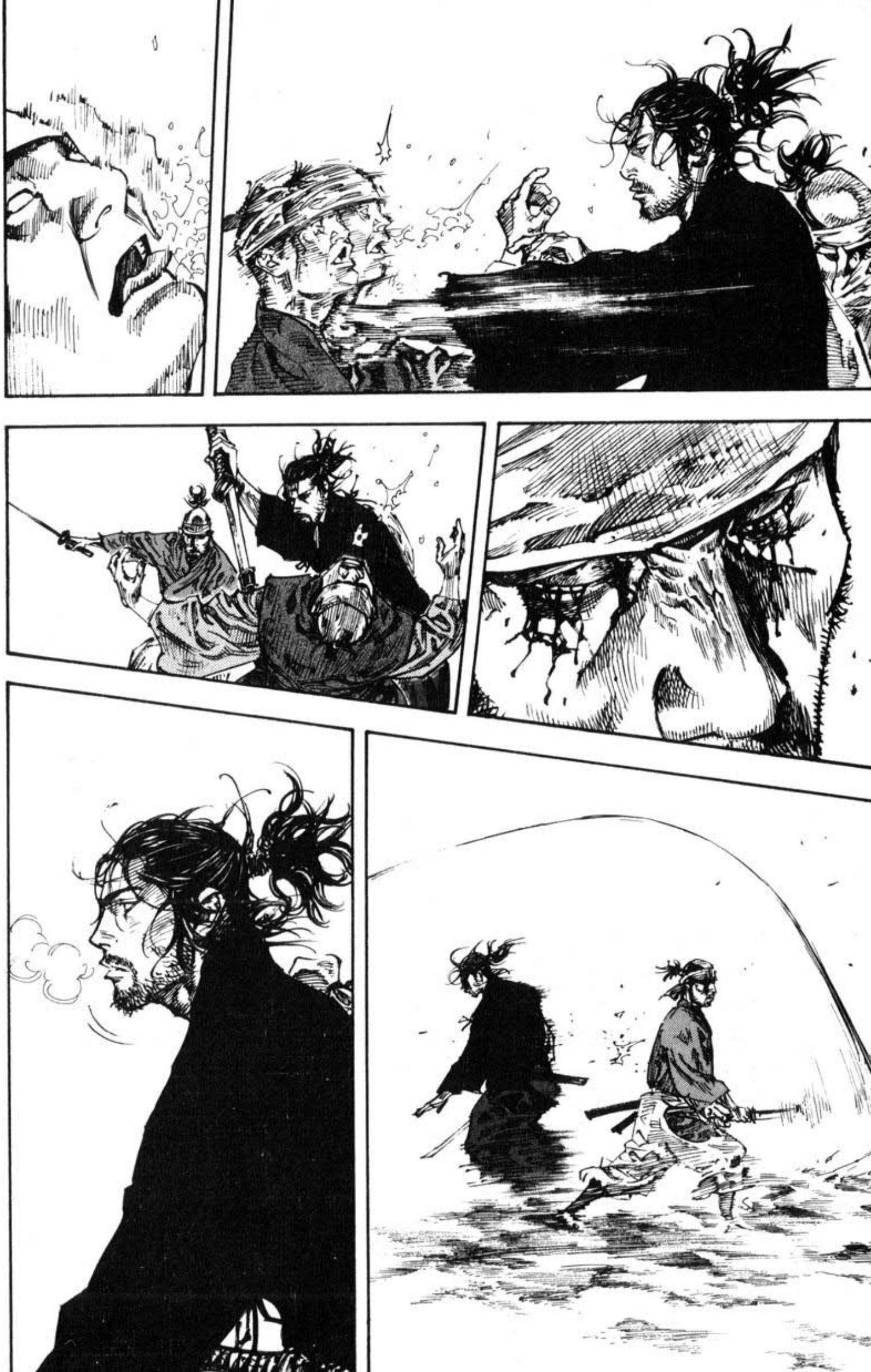

THAT IS, UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING EXTRA-ORDINARY.
IF YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THE TEN, NO ONE CARES WHO YOU ARE.

...TO BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO TAKE ON MUSASHI.
DON'T BE RIDICU...

SOMETHING TRULY EXTRAORDINARY...
SIR OE...

WHAT ?
THERE'S STILL SOME TIME LEFT.
I'D LIKE TO TRADE SPOTS WITH ONE OF THE MEN BELOW.
I WOULD LIKE TO BE IN A POSITION ...

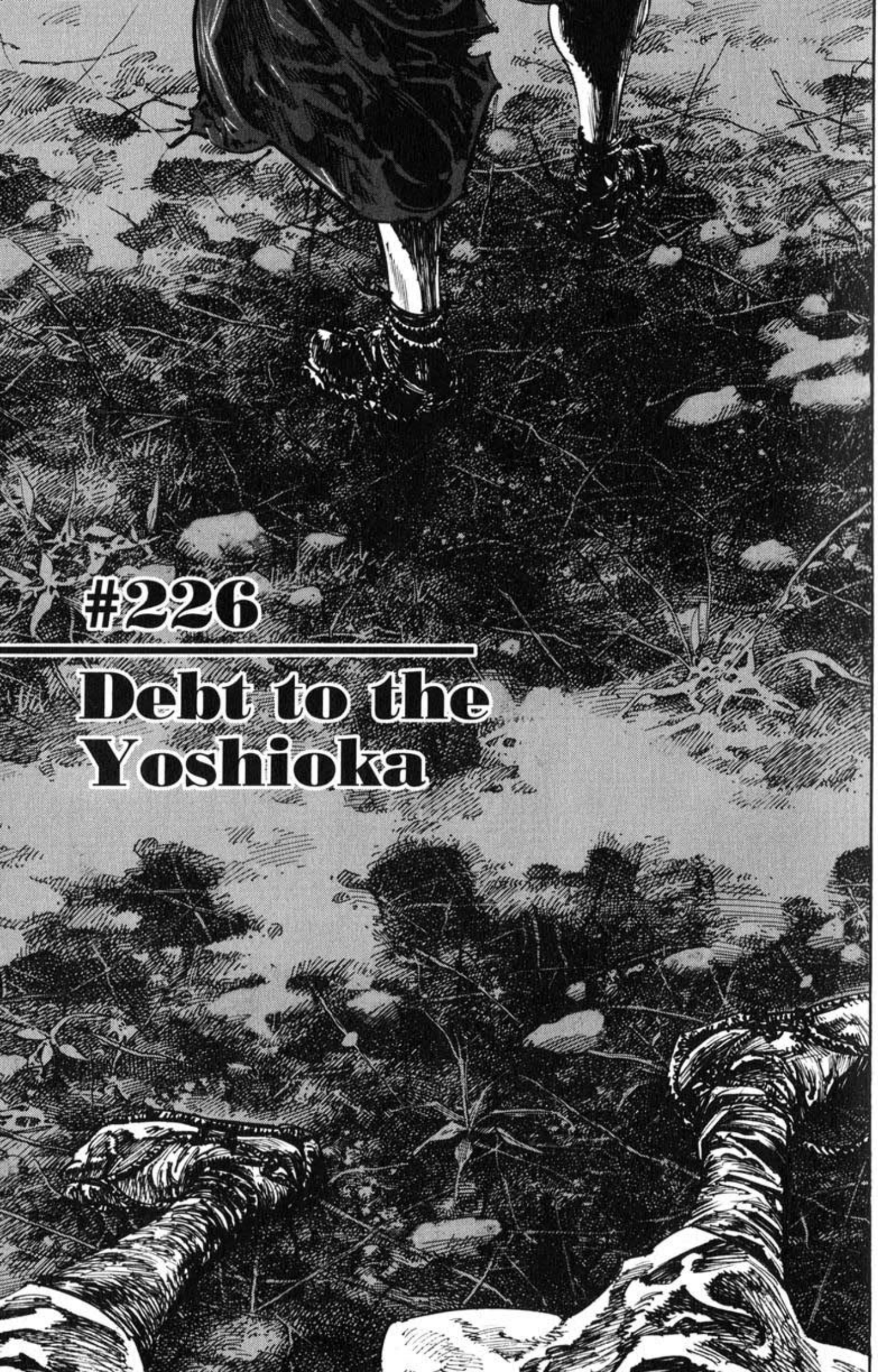
HM?
KRAK
?
WHA--?!
!
!
SHWM



F
S
H
...

Vagabond

(MIYAMOTO MUSASHI!)
宮本武蔵だ！！
すごい自信だね
(YOU HAVE SUCH CONFIDENCE!)


#226
Debt to the Yoshioka

SEVENTY AGAINST ONE...
...THEY WON'T ALL COME AT ME AT ONCE.
HOWEVER ...

BUT SO WHAT? IT'S STILL GOING TO BE...
...VERY TOUGH.
INSTEAD OF IT BEING 70 AGAINST ONE...
...IT'S MORE LIKE 70 SUCCESSIVE ONE-ON-ONE MATCHES.
OR SOME-THING LIKE THAT.
IT'S USELESS TO GET TOO WORKED UP ABOUT THIS.

PLIP
IF I WASTE TOO MUCH TIME ON ONE OPPONENT, ANOTHER WILL GET TO ME.
AND THAT'LL BE IT FOR ME. THE END.
PLIP
PLIP

DON'T LET YOUR HEART BE STILL.
IT MUST NOT STOP FOR ANYONE.
F S S S H
ALLOW IT TO FLOW WHEREVER IT MAY.
H H

YOU SEE. YOU'RE DEAD.
EVENTUALLY, I VOW TO KILL YOU.
STAY ALIVE UNTIL THEN.
BOTH OF THEM HAD OPPOR-TUNITIES...
...TO FINISH ME OFF...
...BUT THEY DIDN'T DO IT.

THIS IS A DEBT...
...I OWE TO THE YOSHI-OKA.
AND I WAS ABLE TO LIVE A YEAR LONGER.
THEY GAVE ME THIS YEAR...

THANK YOU...

WHSSSH

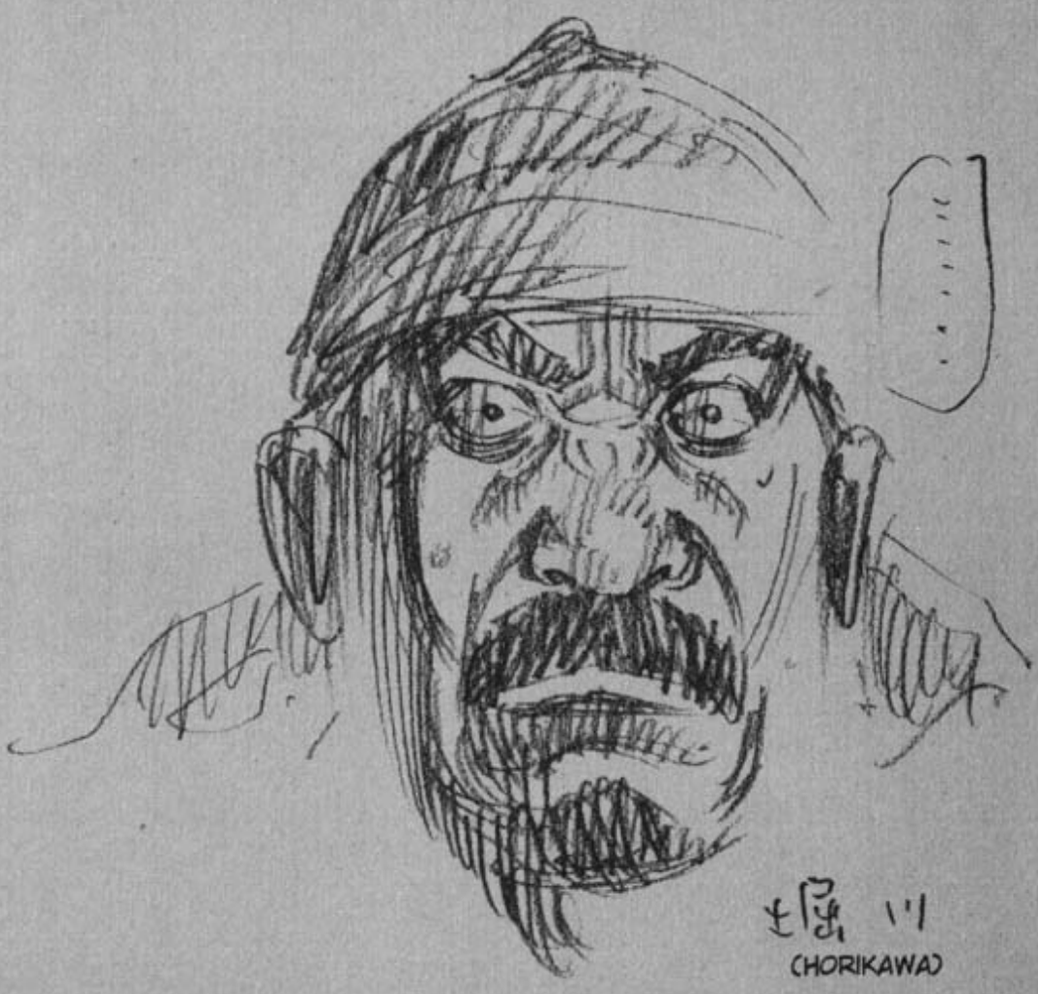
FICH
FICH
WAHH!
?

!!
!
FICH
FICH
FWUMP
MU--
MUSASHI !
HOW DID --?!
THUNK

THDD
NNGH
!
WH
AM
?!
IT'S MUSASHI
!
HE'S HERE!
HE...

...
THE MOUN-TAIN?!
THAT'S WHERE UEDA IS!
WHERE ?!
THE MOUN-TAIN PATH!
HORI-KAWA SENSEI!
HUF
HUF
HUF
LET'S SEE, HOW MANY DID I CUT DOWN JUST NOW...?

Vagabond

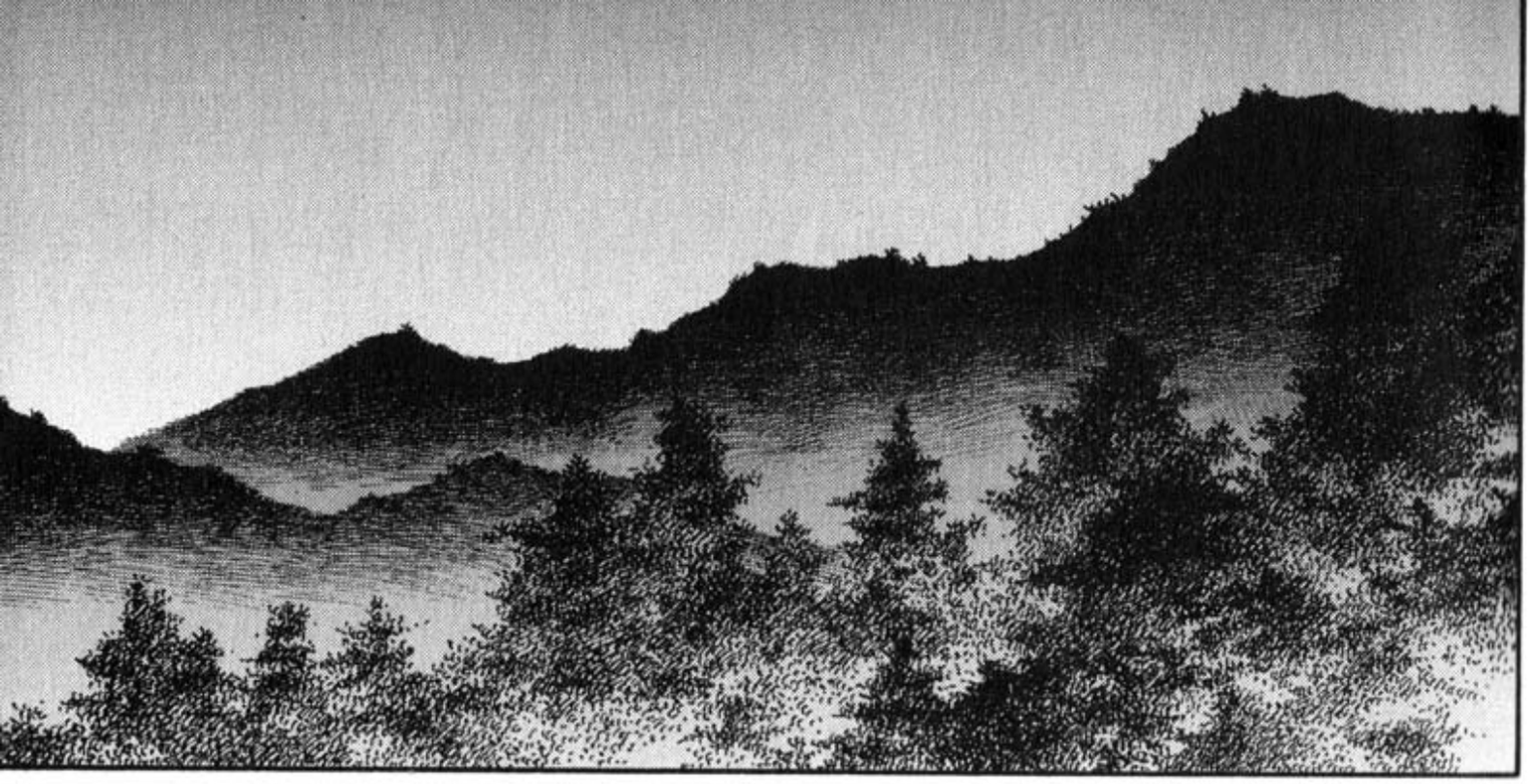

(HORIKAWA)

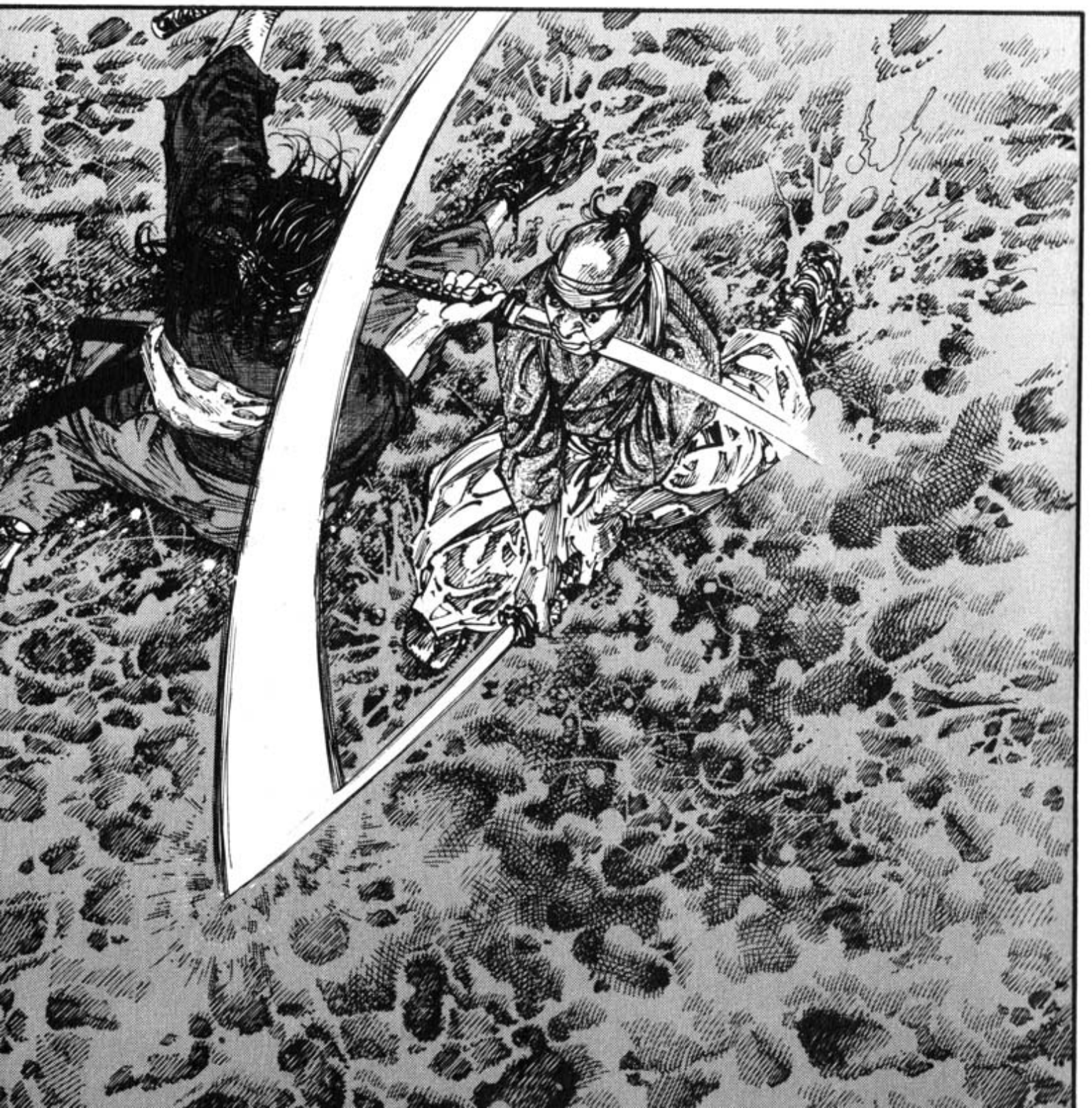
#227 | Army of One

FICH
UEDA ?!
FICH
UEDA!!
FICH
FICH

FICH
IS UEDA ALL RIGHT?!
FICH

...
WE DON'T KNOW!
THAT CAN'T BE! IS UEDA SENSEI OKAY?!
MUSASHI CAME FROM THE MOUNTAIN!
THAT'S WHERE MASTER UEDA IS!
WHAT ?





SPLRT

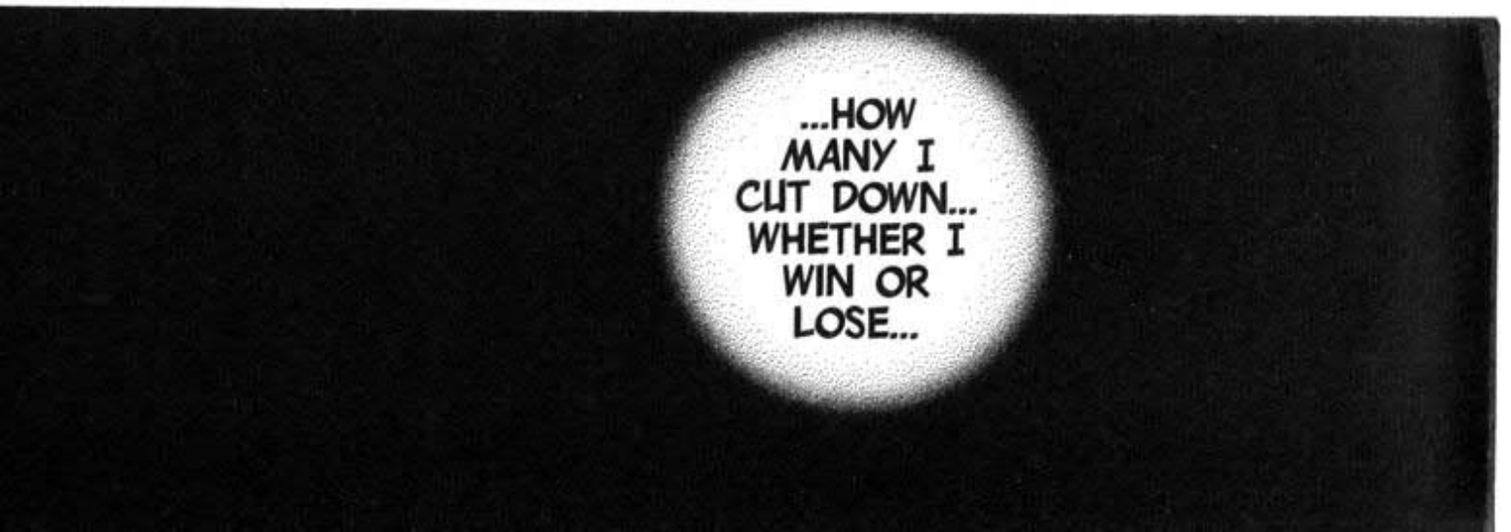
HM?
TUGG
TUGG
UMF!

TUGG

FWMP

NO...
TOO RIGID.

IT DOESN'T MATTER ...
MAKE THE EGO FADE...
MUST KEEP CALM...


...HOW MANY I CUT DOWN... WHETHER I WIN OR LOSE...

HAVE NO ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.
LEAN NEITHER FORWARD NOR BACKWARDS.
REPEAT THIS MOMENT OF THE PRESENT OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
...

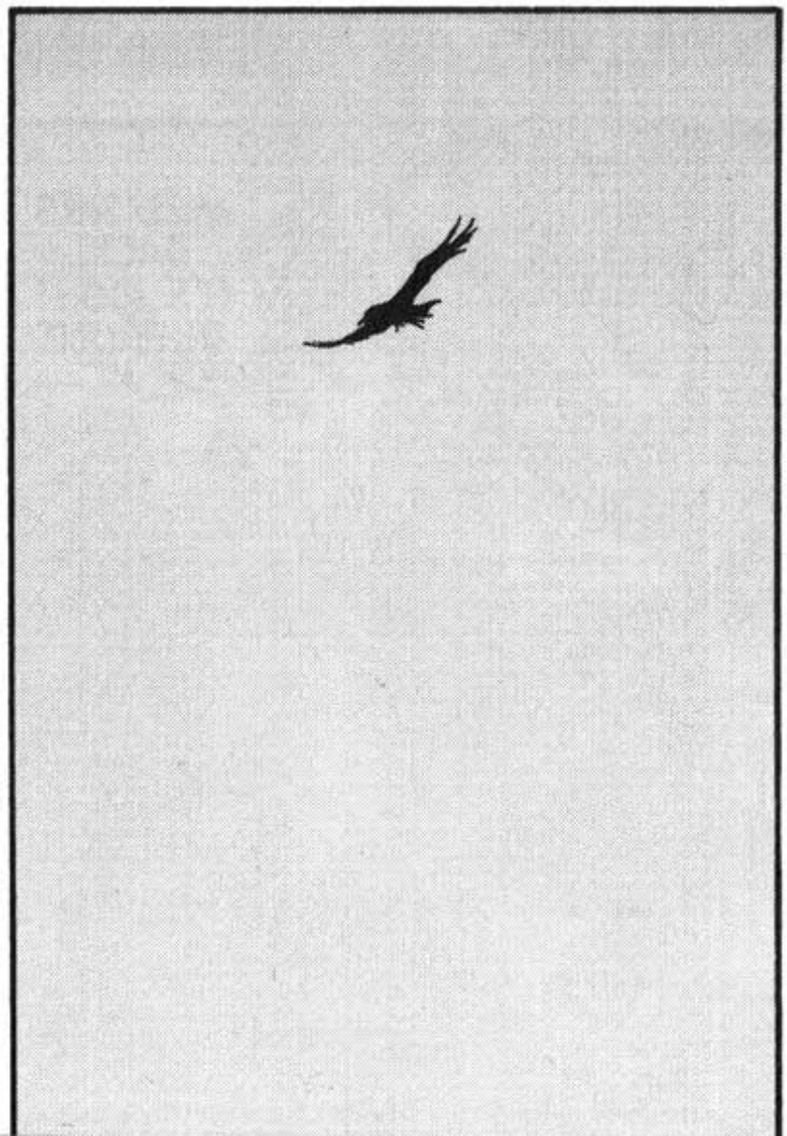
HUF
HUF
HUF
...
EASIER SAID THAN DONE!

HORIKAWA YOSHIBE HERE!
...OF THE TEN SWORDSMEN OF THE YOSHIOKA!
HYUU

!!
HORI-
KAWA...
!!
!!
SWISSH
!!

!
WHUMP
DON'T PANIC!
SPREAD OUT AND SURROUND HIM!
HUF
HUF
SWP
HUF
HUF
...?
...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

...
FWUMP
HUF
HUF
HUF
MUSASHI'S BACK, IT'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME...
HE...
HE... DA...



FWMP

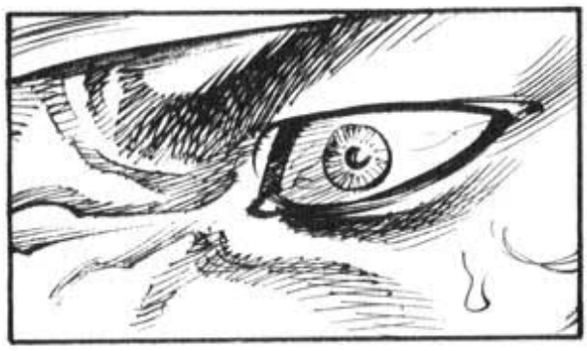
Vagabond

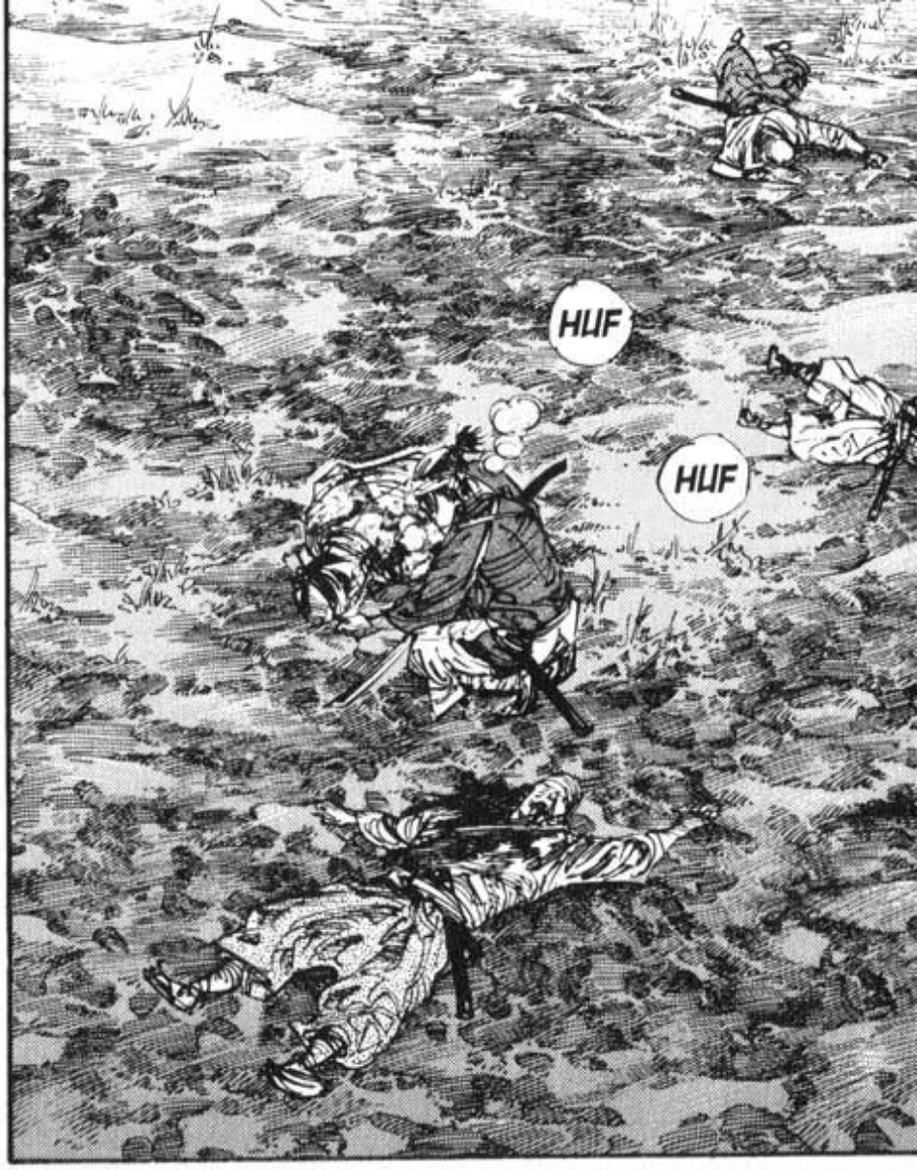
土屋 川
(HORIKAWA)

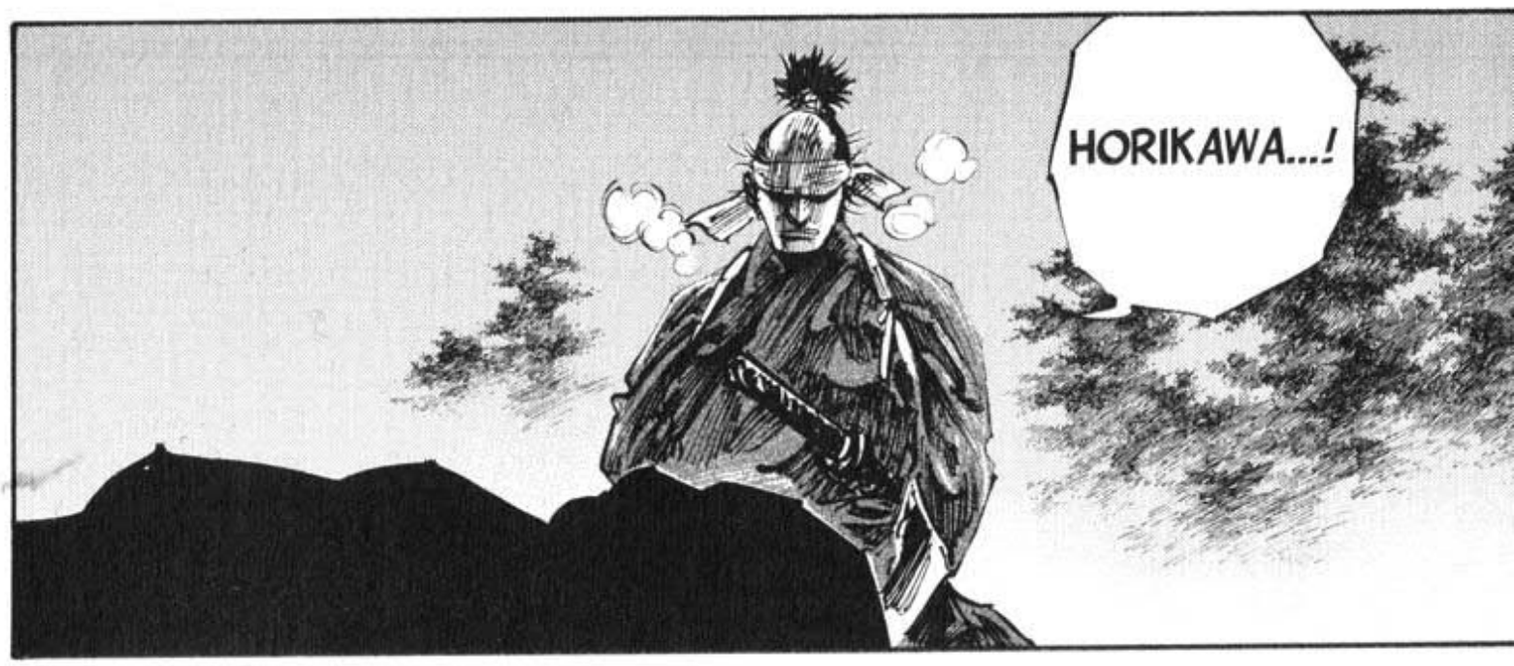
#228

Swarm

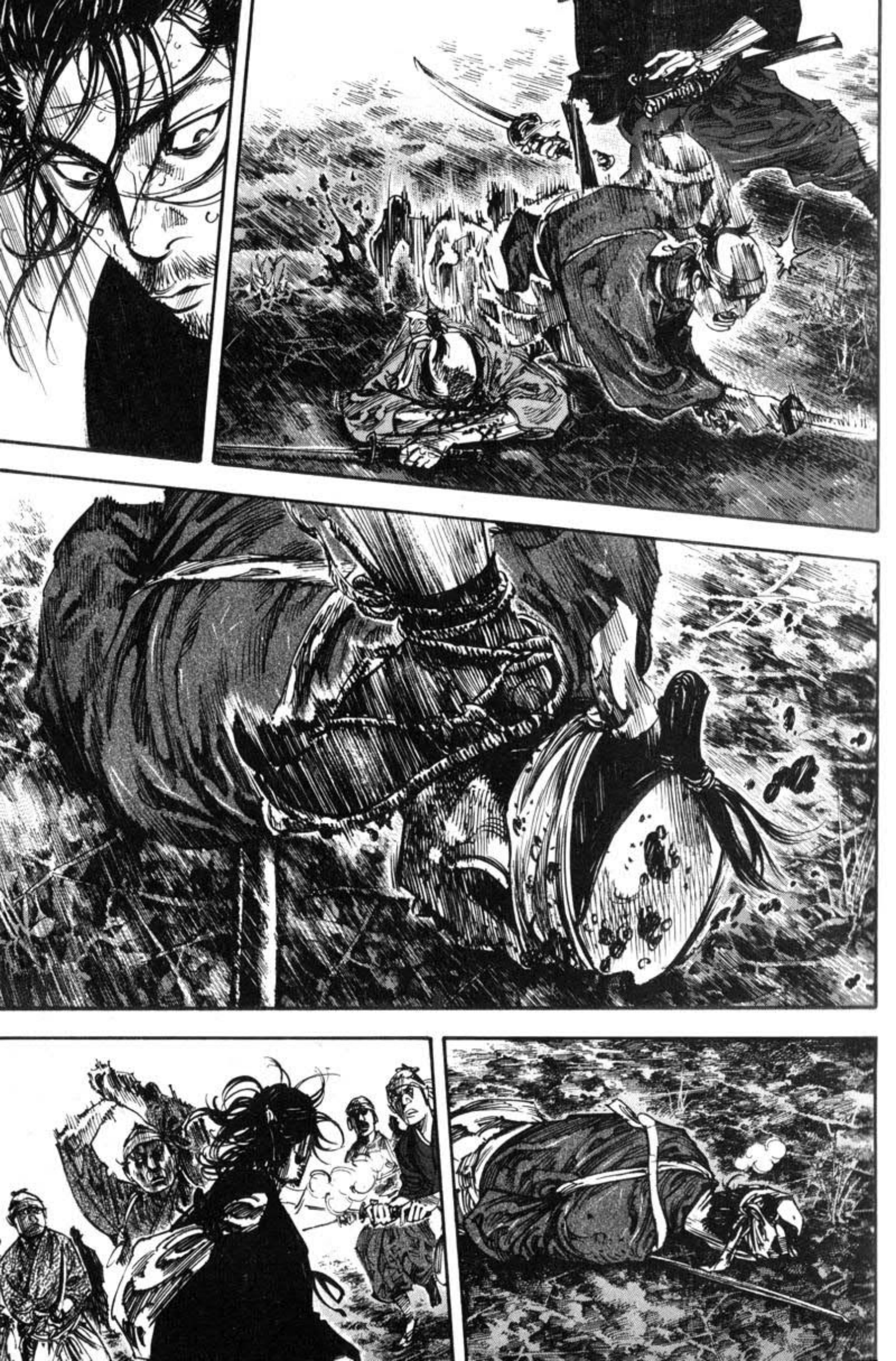
FLUMP




HUF
HUF


HORIKAWA...!

ANOTHER ONE OF THE TEN DOWN...
FICH



TUMP
WHUD
MASTER FUJIIE!
FORGET HONOR!
DO JUST AS OUR MASTER INTENDED-- ATTACK FROM BEHIND!
WE LOST THE HONOR IN THIS FIGHT THE MOMENT WE DECIDED TO GO 70 AGAINST ONE! THIS WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO BE FAIR.
I'LL FINISH HIM OFF!
FICH

SHOVE
!!

GRAB
KLAKK

SWK
FWN
CH

PLISSH
FU...
FUJIIE!

UR...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

FICH

KURANDO ...
HE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN MASTER UEDA TOO!
SO FUJIIE'S DOWN...
NO, OUR NEW MASTER IS TOO STRONG.
...
THAT SHALL CONTINUE TO BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY ...
...EVEN AFTER THIS BATTLE IS OVER.
NOW GO.
WATCH OVER UEDA...
...OUR MASTER.

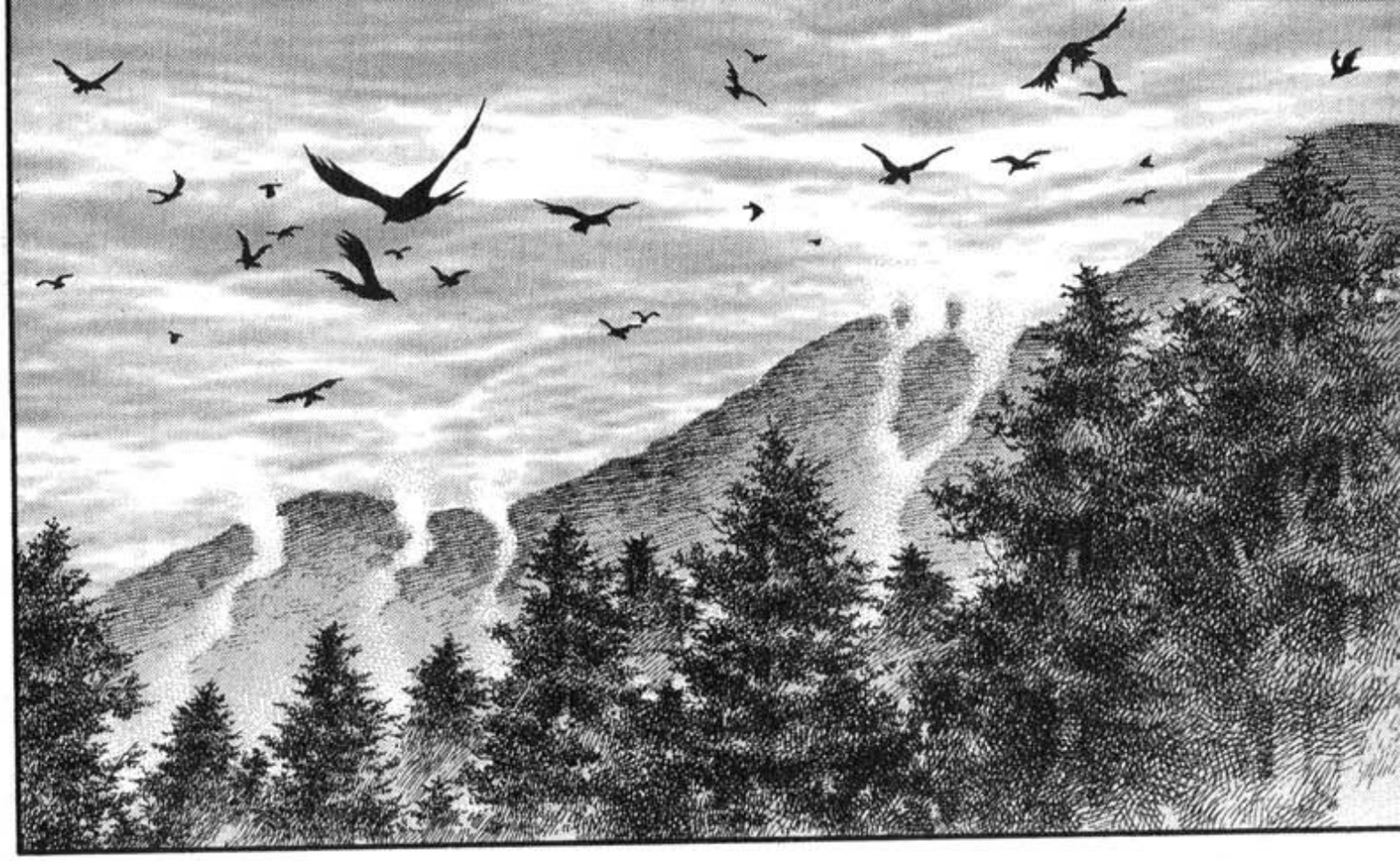
FICH
YOICHI ...!
NOW THEN...
HE'S TOO STRONG ...
WE MUST FORGET ABOUT FIGHTING HIM ONE-ON-ONE, OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
SWARM IN ON HIM ALL AT ONCE.
WHO'S GOING TO JOIN ME?
WE'RE WITH YOU!!
WE ARE YOUR DIRECT STUDENTS, YOICHI SENSEI...
THE SEVEN OF US SHALL STAY WITH YOU UNTIL THE END!

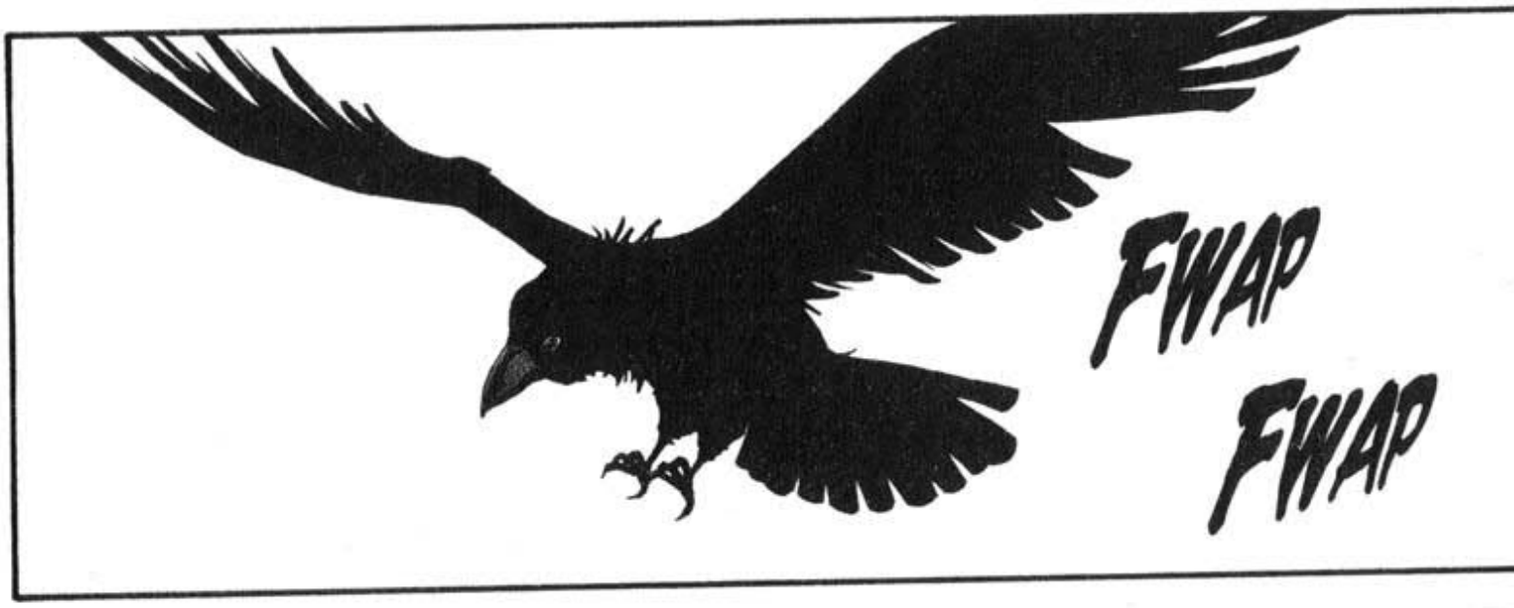
WE'LL WAIT UNTIL HE'S COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED.
THANK YOU.
BUT IT'S NOT TIME JUST YET...
?
HYUU...
HAH...
HUF HUF HUF...

Vagabond

YOICHI

#229 The Rapids




FWAP
FWAP

TP
TP

...

...LIKE A PIECE OF FLESH.
LOOK-ING AT ME...
DAMN YOU...
ARGHH ...!
PECK
PECK

THUNK
!
VWSH
ITS CUT DOESN'T BITE.
A POOR SWORD.

KLK
!!
FICH
FICH
FICH

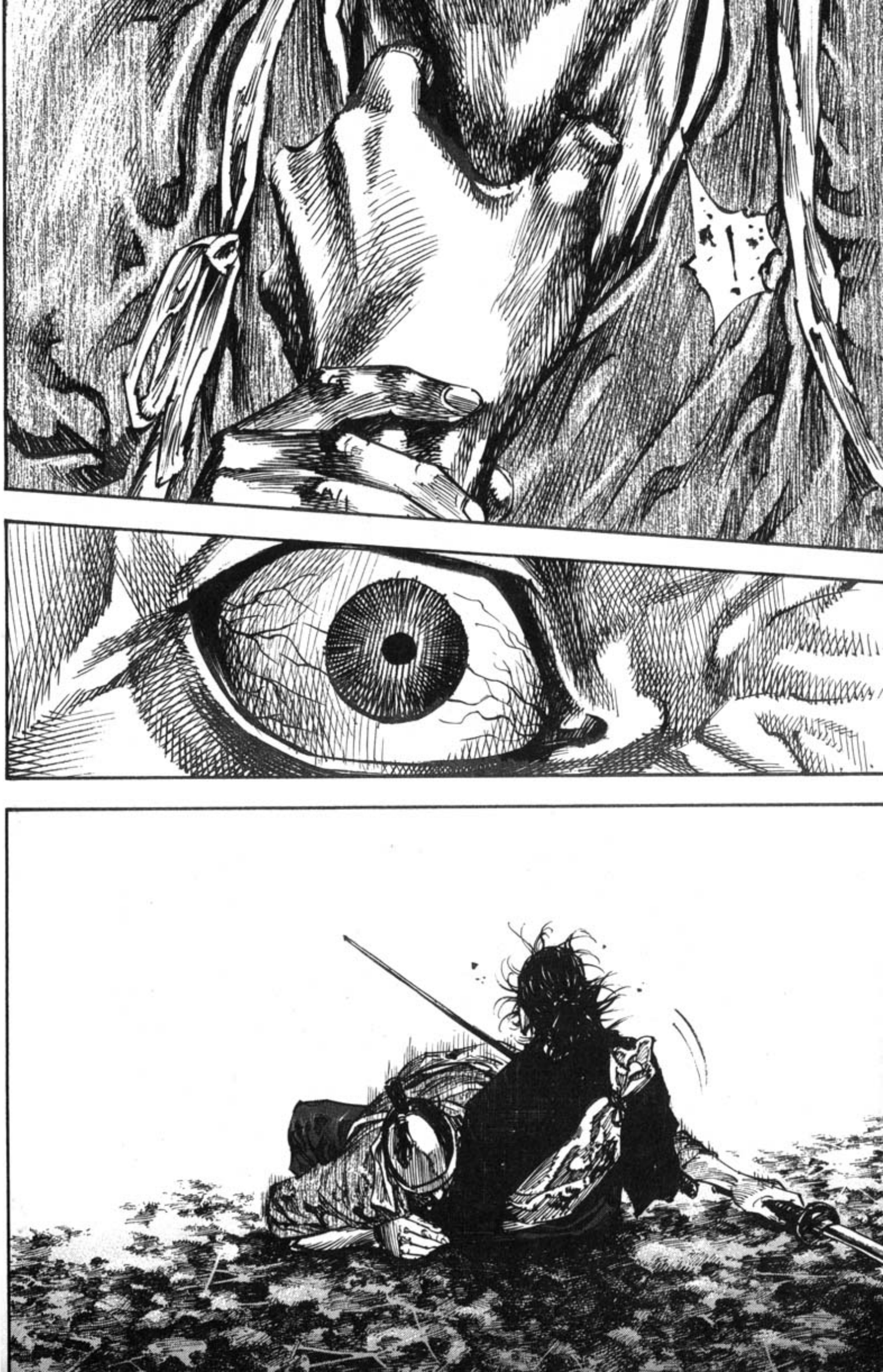
HYUUUU

FICH
FICH
FICH

WAIT...
DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN THIS.
STOP THINK-ING...

AZUMA KŌSHIRŌ OF THE TEN SWORDS-MEN OF THE YOSHIOKA!
I GOT YOU, MUSASHI!
AZUMA!
YES!
FSS
HH

MY JAW'S BEEN CHOPPED OFF!
I'VE BEEN CUT.
BURNING PAIN.
!
...
URR...



WH
!!
UDD

WHOOSH
!!

OH...
IT'S
STILL
THERE.

F
S
S
H
H
H

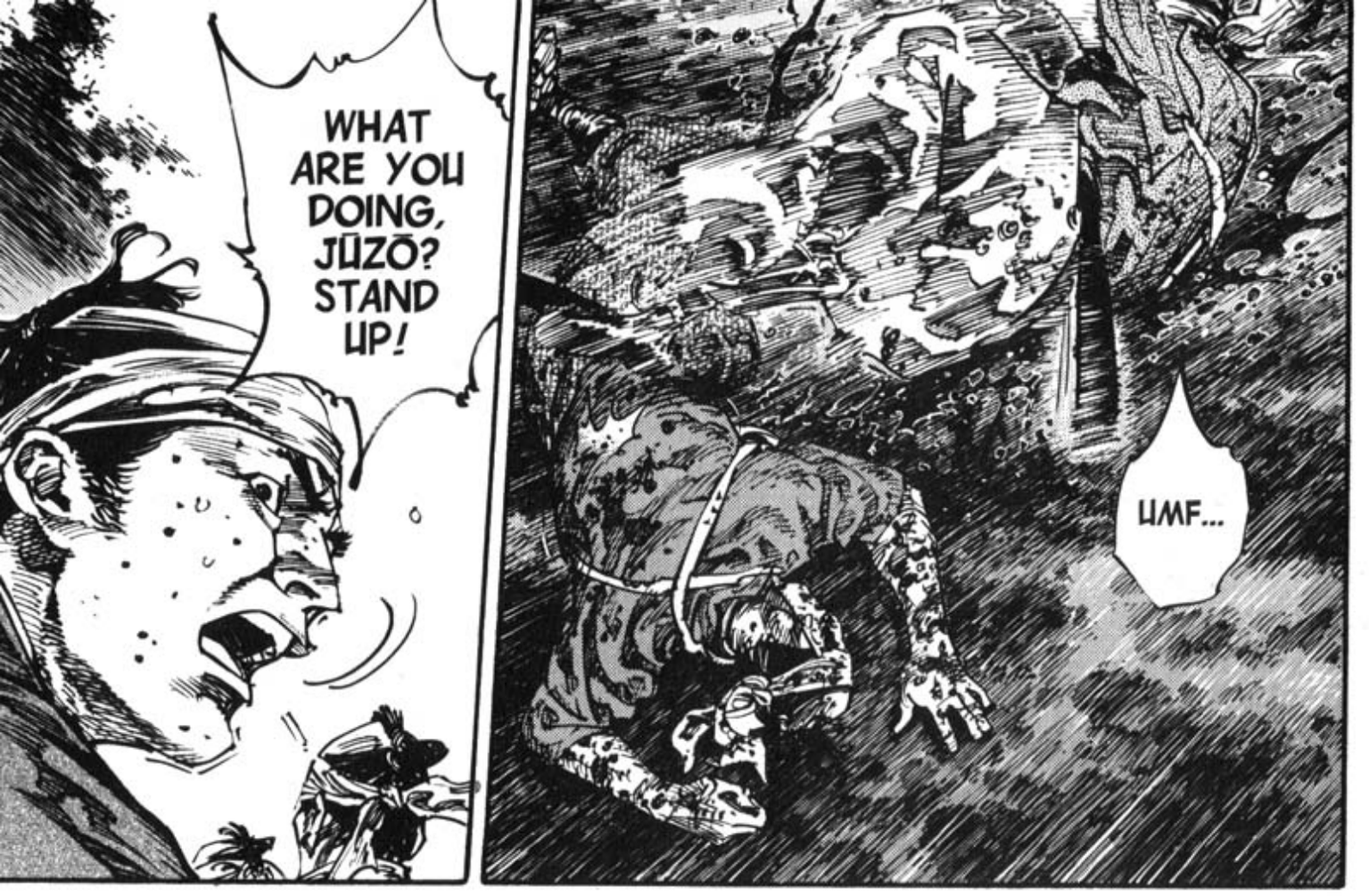
Vagabond

#230 Sallowed Sky

URR...
AHH!
SHRT
HYUU
CUT MUSASHI DOWN!
SWMP
MACHI-MURA!!
STAY CALM! FATALITIES ARE INEVI-TABLE!
ARRGH!
NNGH!

FICH
VWSH

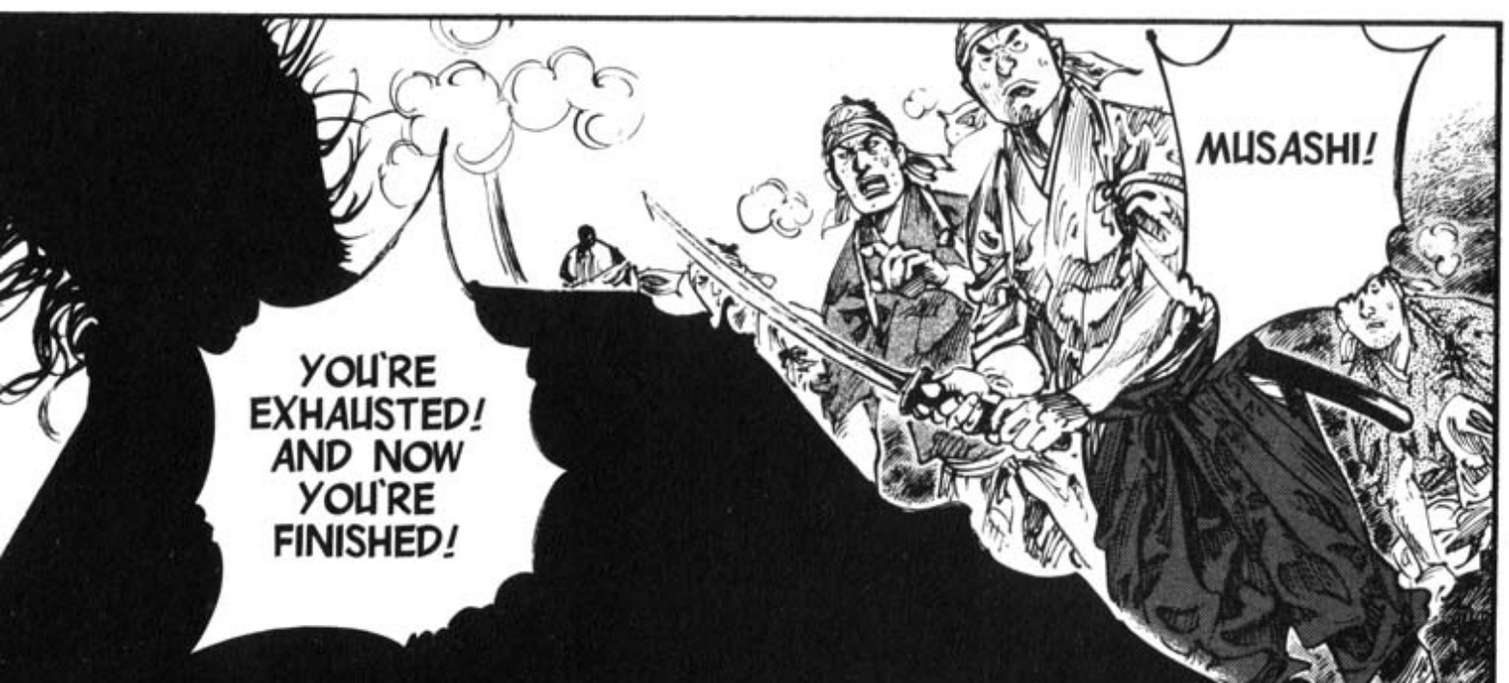
...
SURROUND HIM! MOVE!
COME ON! HOW MANY OF US HAS HE KILLED?!

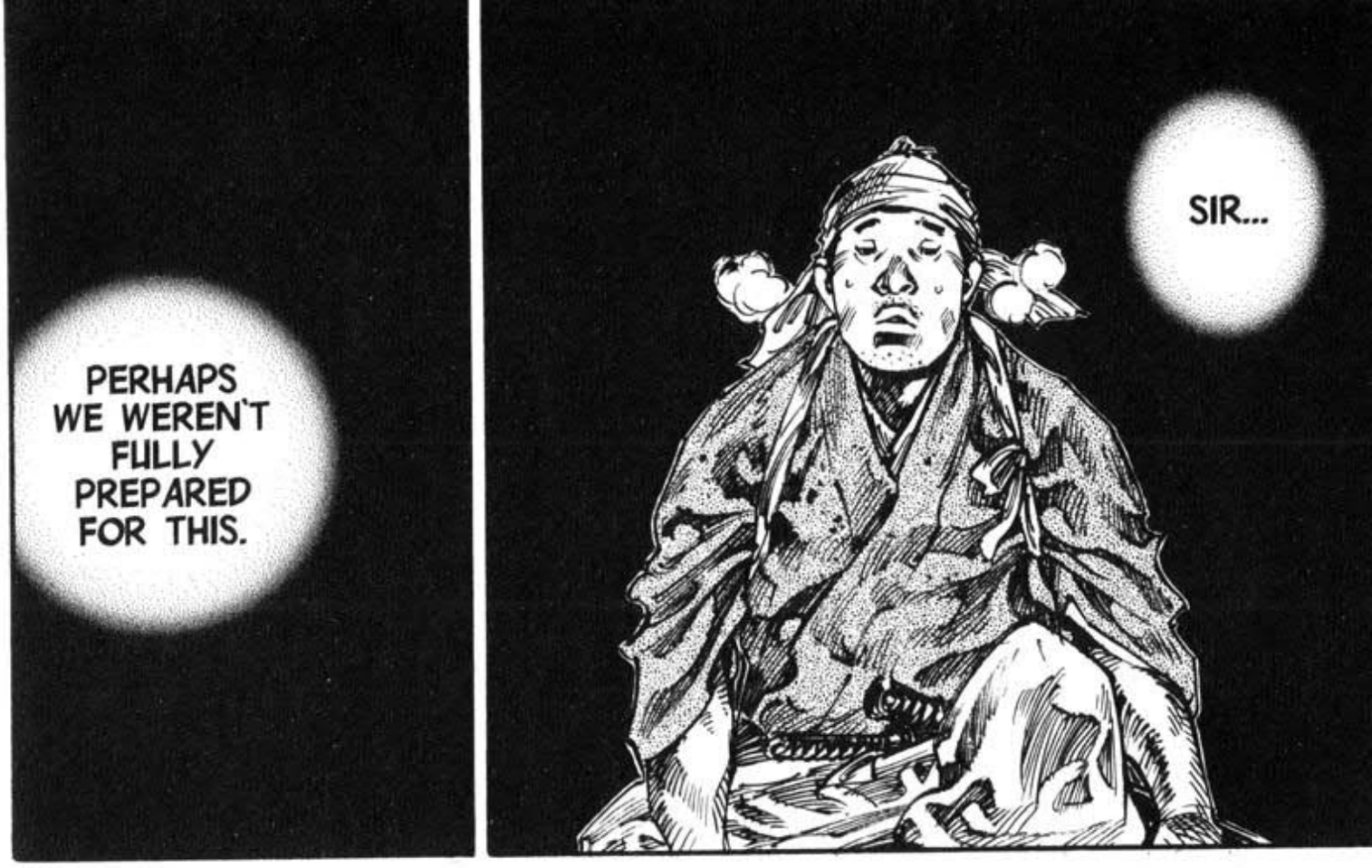

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, JŪZŌ? STAND UP!
UMF...

SIR...

JUST LOOK AT HOW HARD HE'S BREATHING NOW!

SIR...
HUF
HUF


MUSASHI!
YOU'RE EXHAUSTED! AND NOW YOU'RE FINISHED!


PERHAPS WE WEREN'T FULLY PREPARED FOR THIS.
SIR...

THIS MORNING, I...
BECAUSE OF OUR NUMBERS, I ASSUMED WE WOULD WIN...

THUNK
THUNK

I ASSUMED THE MATCH WOULD END FAR AWAY FROM WHERE I WOULD BE POSITIONED...
IT DIDN'T EVEN OCCUR TO ME I MIGHT GET KILLED HERE.
I THOUGHT I'D HAVE IT IN SOME SOUP LATER.
I TOOK SOME OF THE KAGAMI MOCHI HOME...
I'M ASHAMED OF MYSELF...
HE CAME HERE ALL BY HIMSELF FULL OF DETERMINATION...
?!
I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO.
WHAT ?!
SIR...

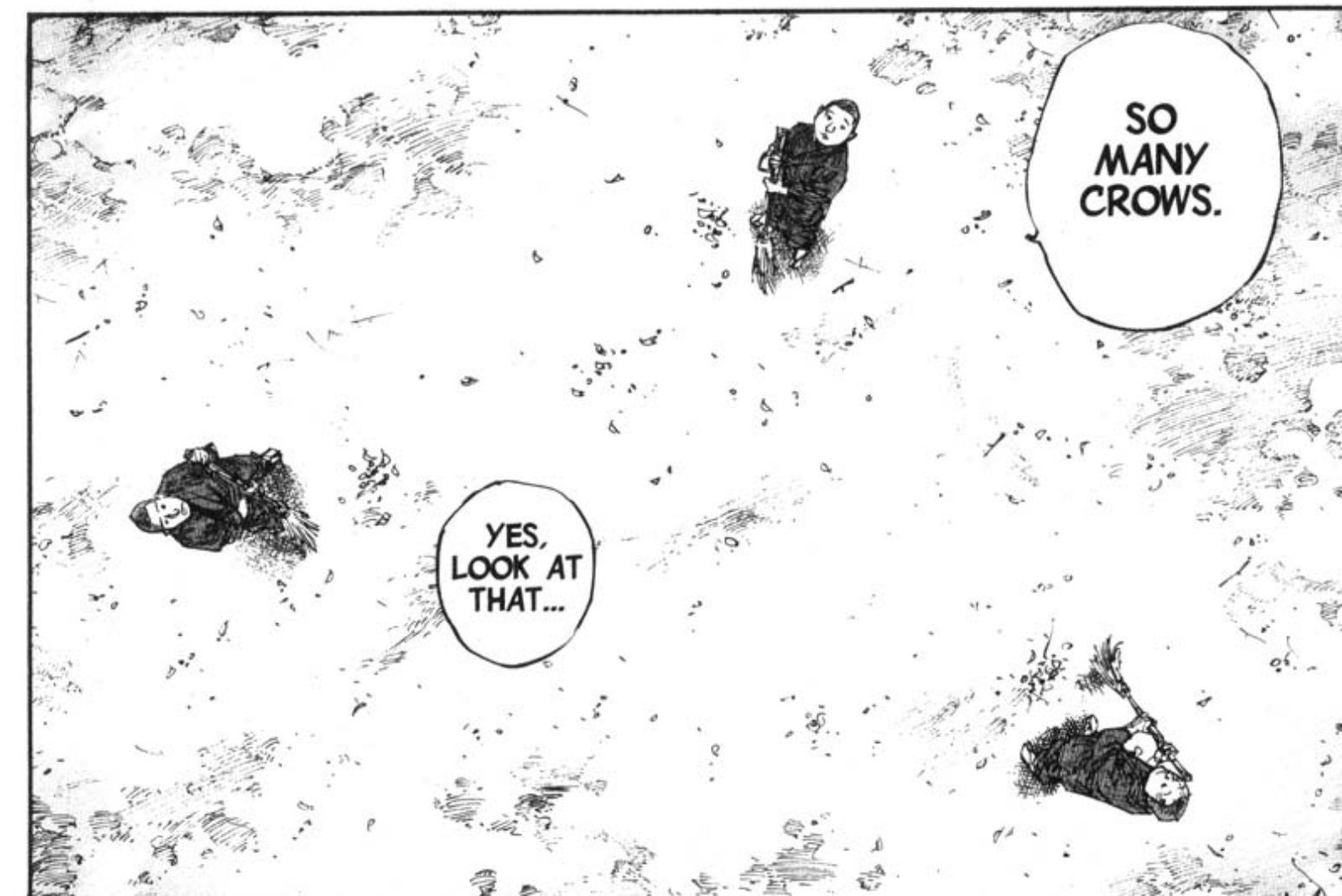
PLEASE LOOK AFTER MY PARENTS BACK HOME!

JŪZŌ!

WAIT, I'M GOING IN FIRST!

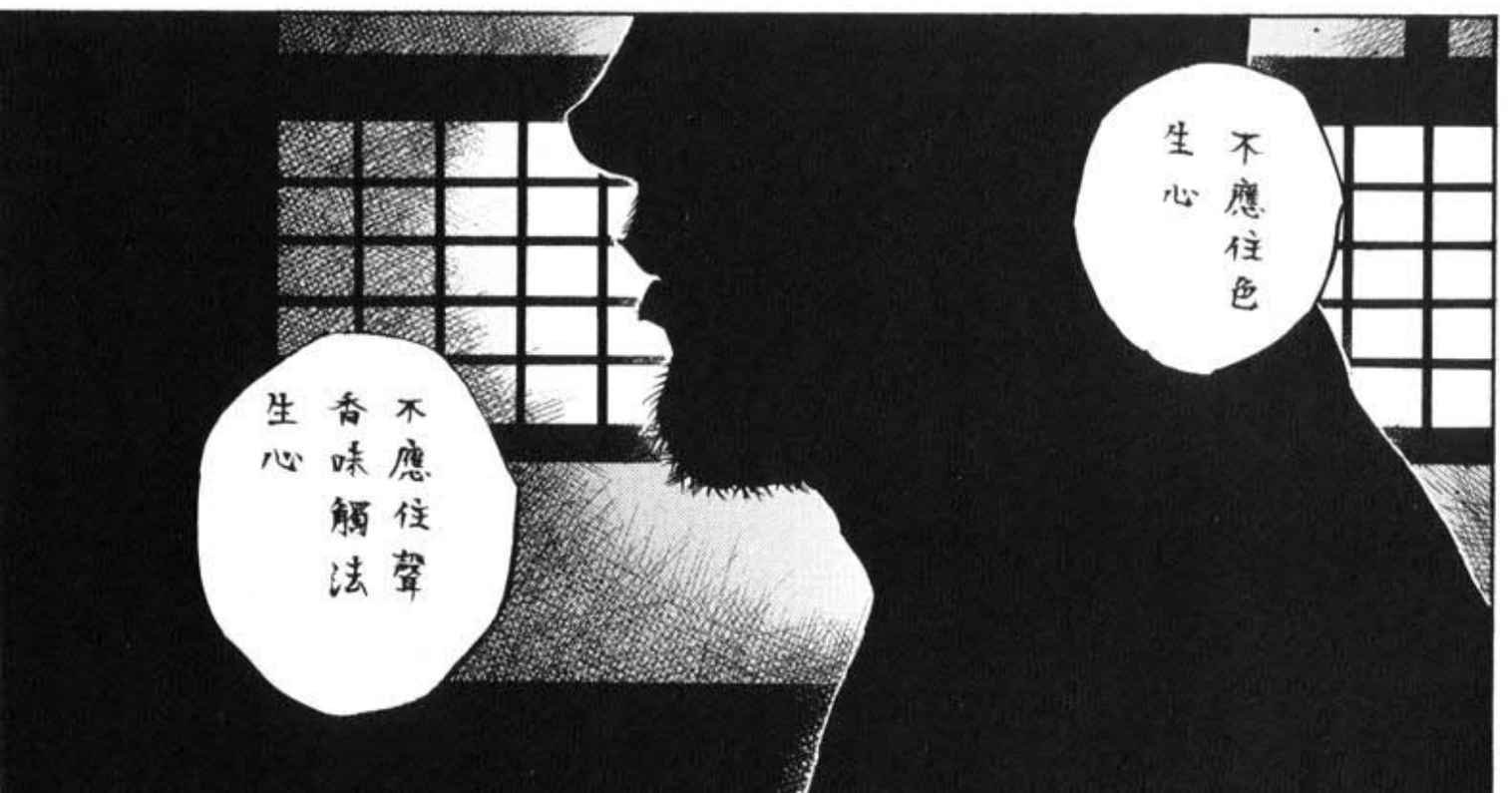
AHHH!!

YARRRH!
GET HIM!
CUT HIM DOWN !!


SO MANY CROWS.
YES, LOOK AT THAT...

諸菩薩摩訶薩應如是生清淨心

是故須菩提


不應住色生心
不應住聲香味觸法生心

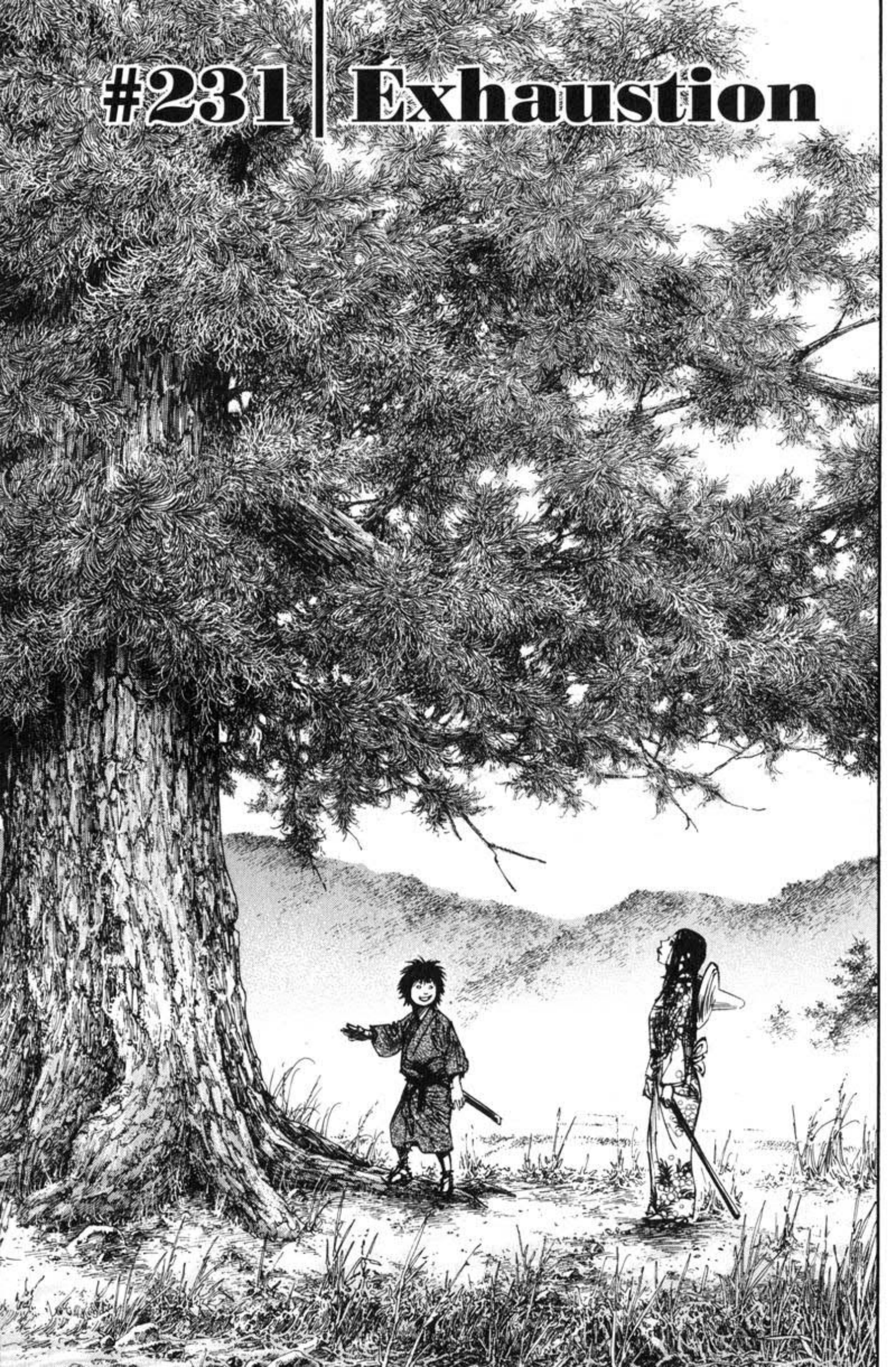
應無所住
而生其心
須菩提
譬如有人身
如須彌山王

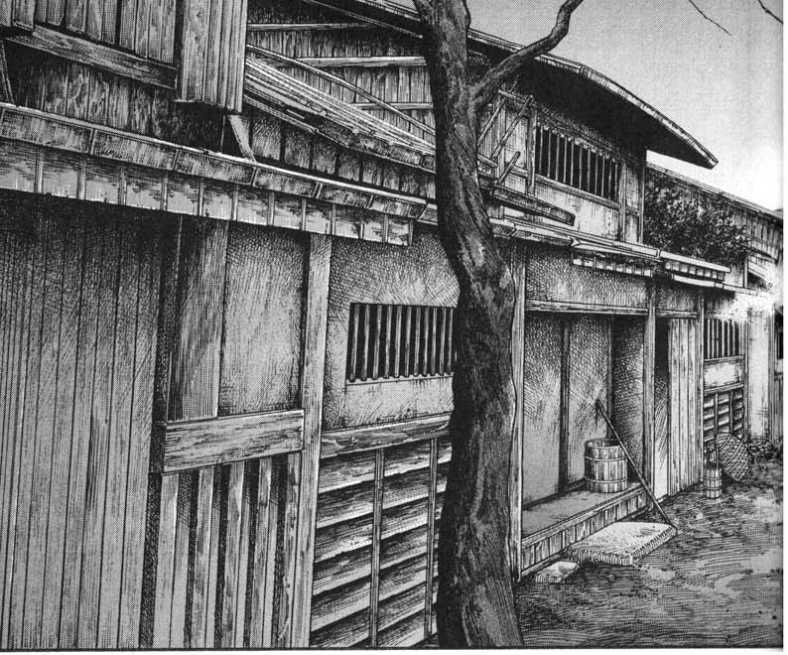
於意云何
是身爲大不
須菩提言
甚大世尊
何以故
佛說非身
是名大身

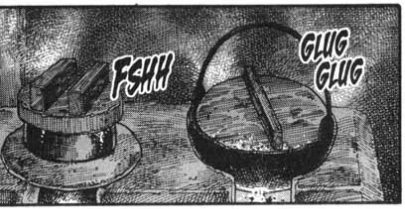
AND THE SKY HAS SUCH AN OMINOUS LOOK TO IT...
MAY THIS BE A PEACEFUL DAY.

Vagabond

#231 | Exhaustion





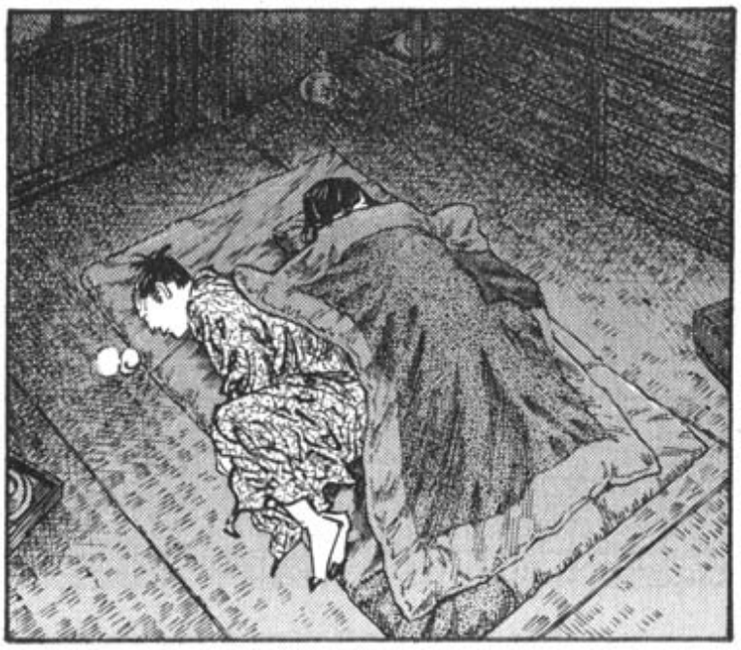

FSHH
GLUG GLUG

KTT
KTT
KTT

COME ON...
UNH... BUT IT'S MORN-ING...
OOH...
RSTL
RSTL

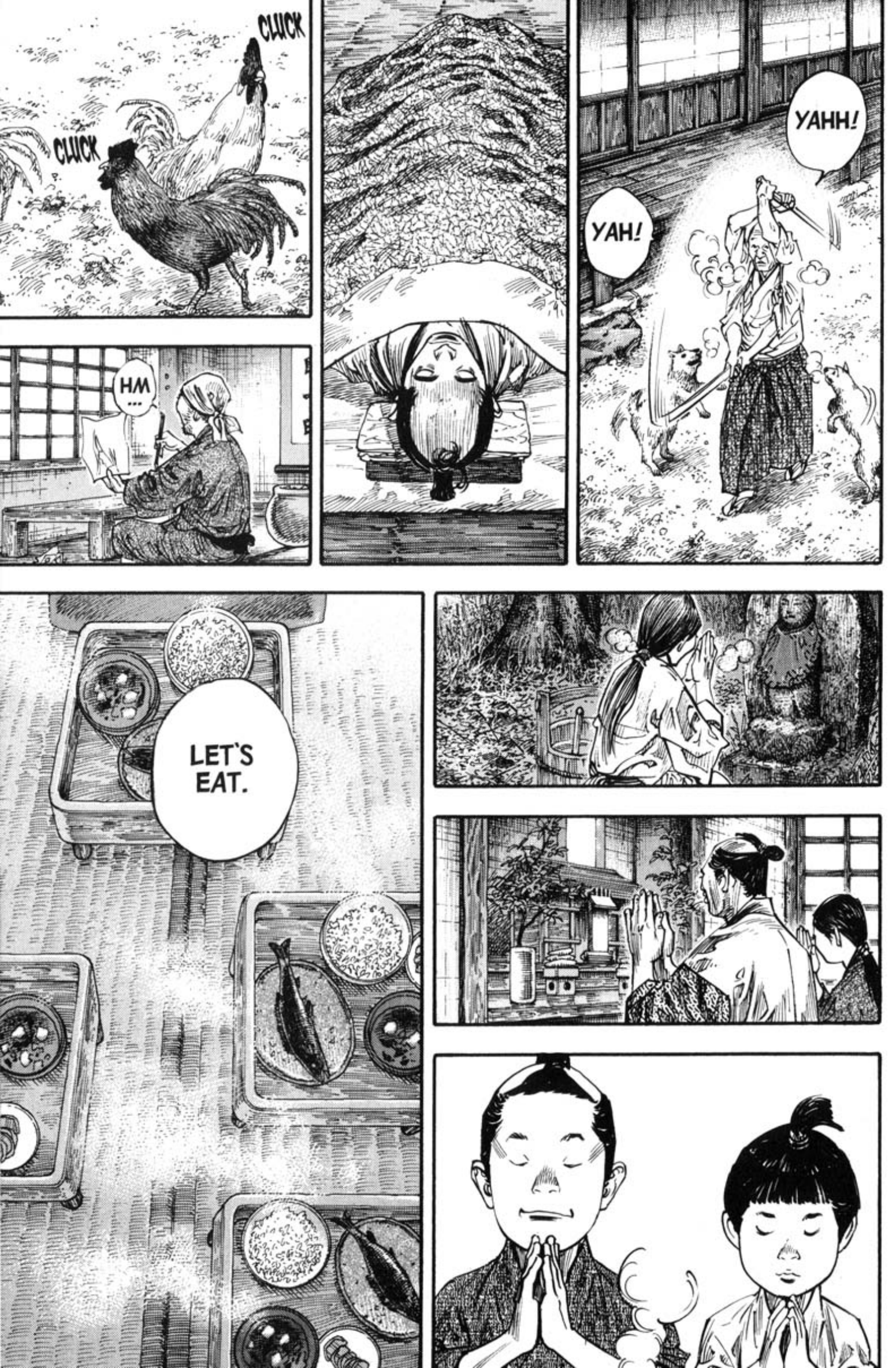
SCHNORR

KTNK

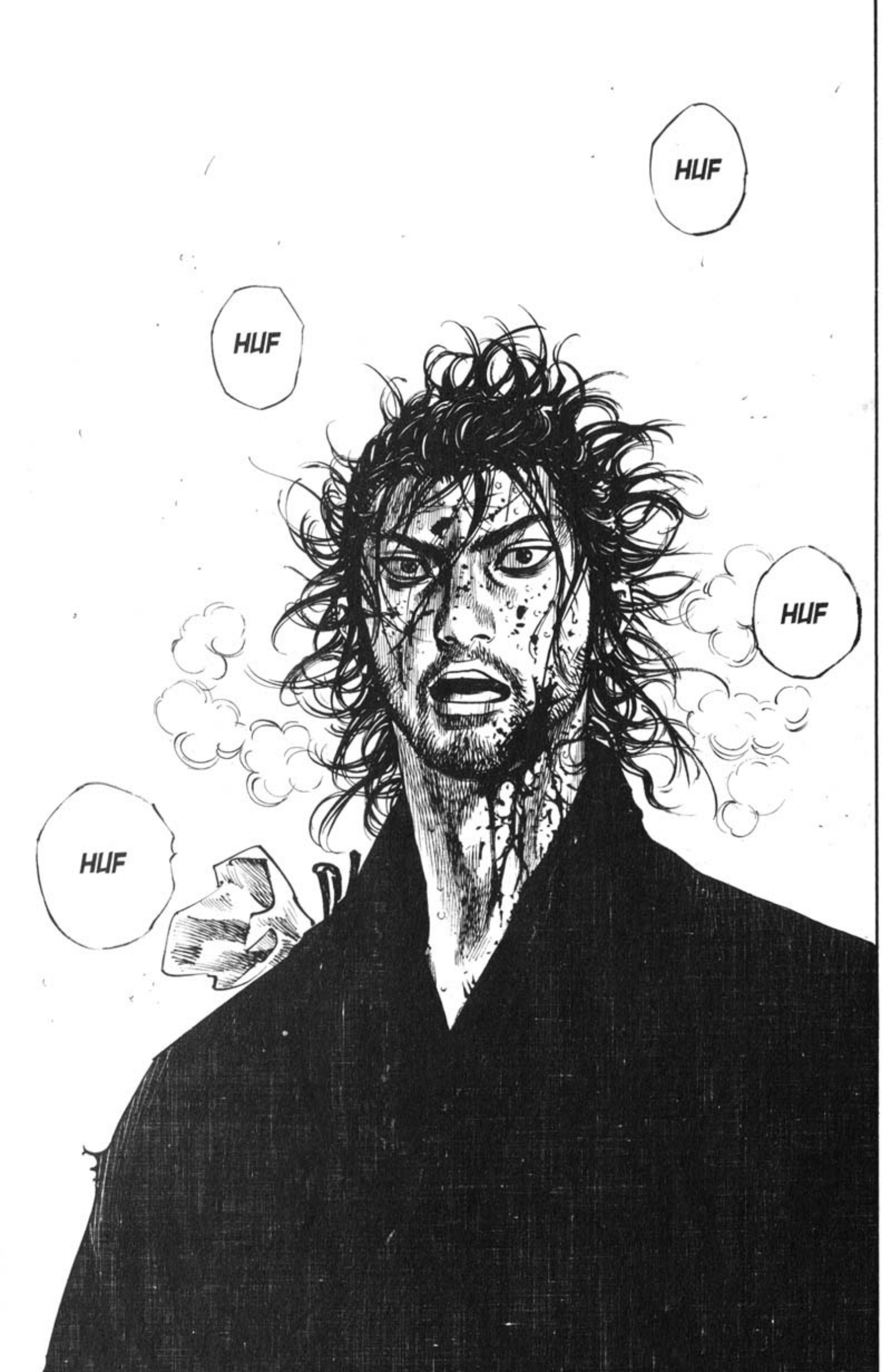


HYUU

AHH
...
OHHH
...


CLUCK
CLUCK
HM...
YAH!
YAHH!
LET'S EAT.

FWUMP


HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

GET HIM.
KILL!
YAHHH-

URR...

DAMN IT!
OUTTA MY WAY!

WHERE'S MUSASHI ?
WHERE'D HE GO?!

UMF ...
KRR
TUGG
SWIP

SPLT
YAHHH!

...
I THOUGHT I ALREADY CUT THIS MAN DOWN?
AH...
FWOM
SPLCH
KLANG

BWAP
AH!
UDD

FWICH

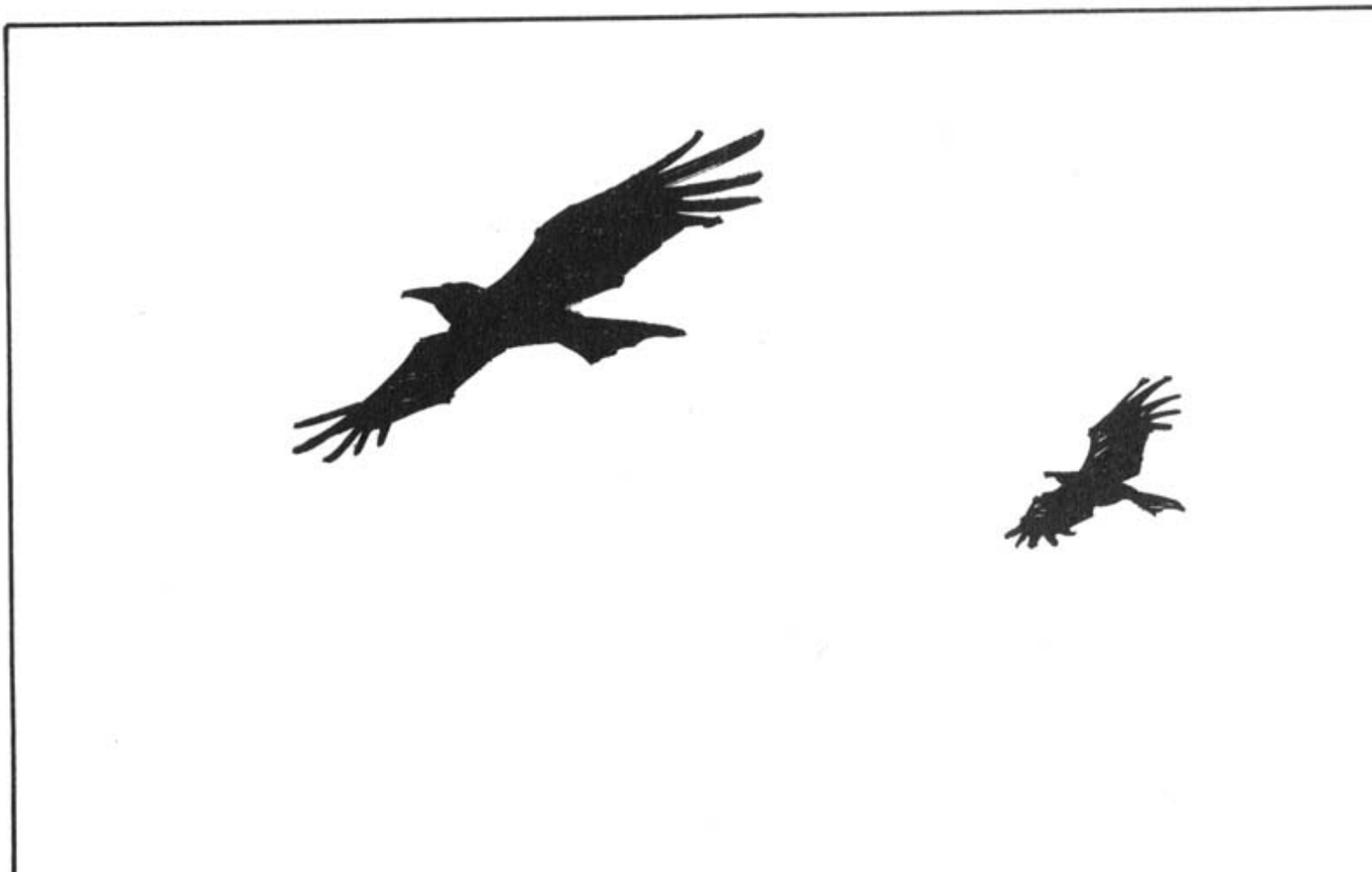
I'VE CUT DOWN SO MANY, YET THEY KEEP COMING AT ME...
HUF
HUF

!
WHUDD
I CUT HIM...
HEH HEH ...

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

YES, SIR.

IT'S TIME...



Vagabond

(PLISH)

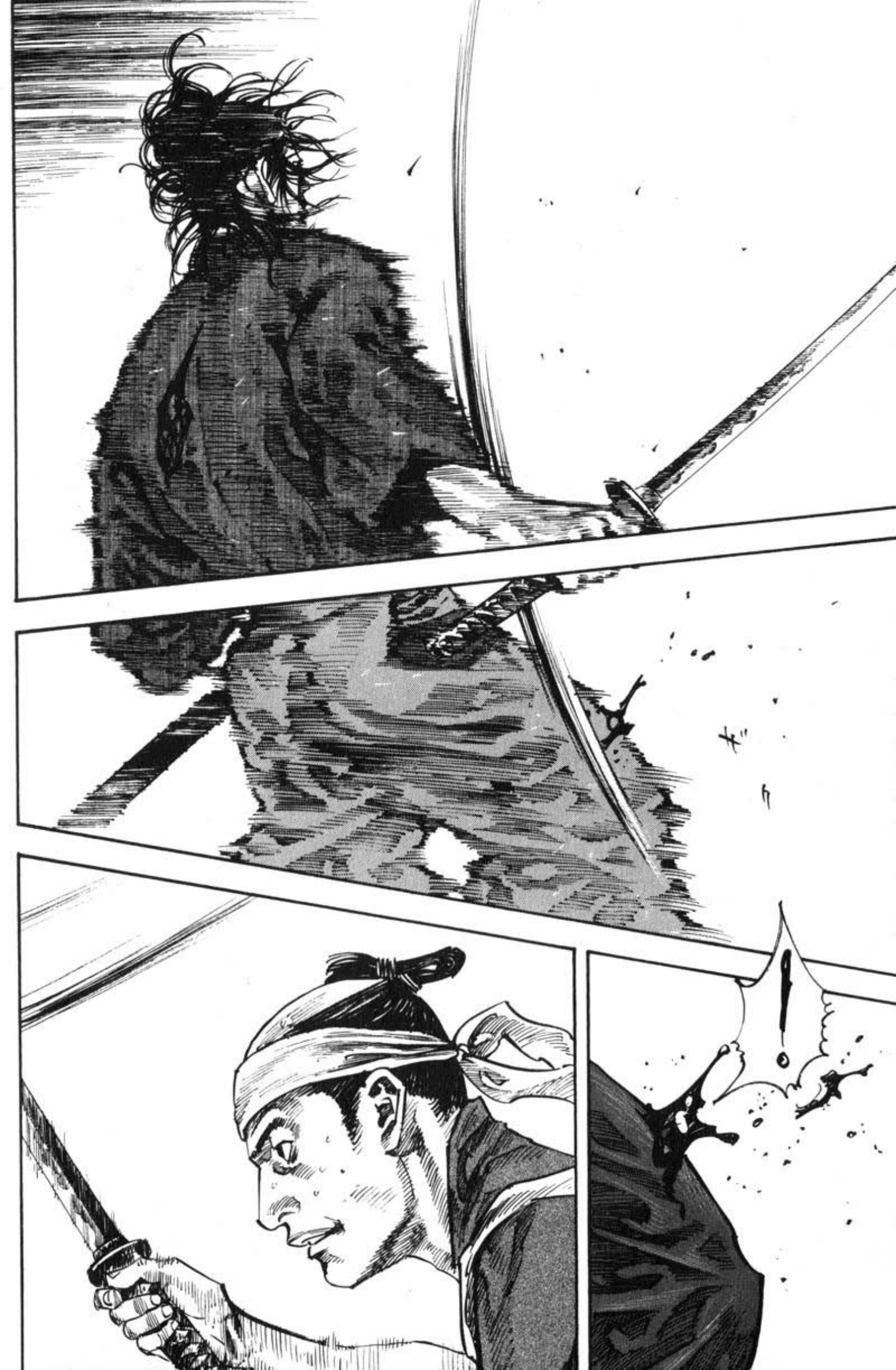
FICH
FICH
FICH
MIHARA...
FICH
...!!
FWOOSH
TAKA-
SHIMA!
YOUR
DEATHS
SHALL
NOT
BE IN
VAIN...

THIS I SWEAR... I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN.
#232 | Life

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
FICH

THUNK
THWAK
FICH



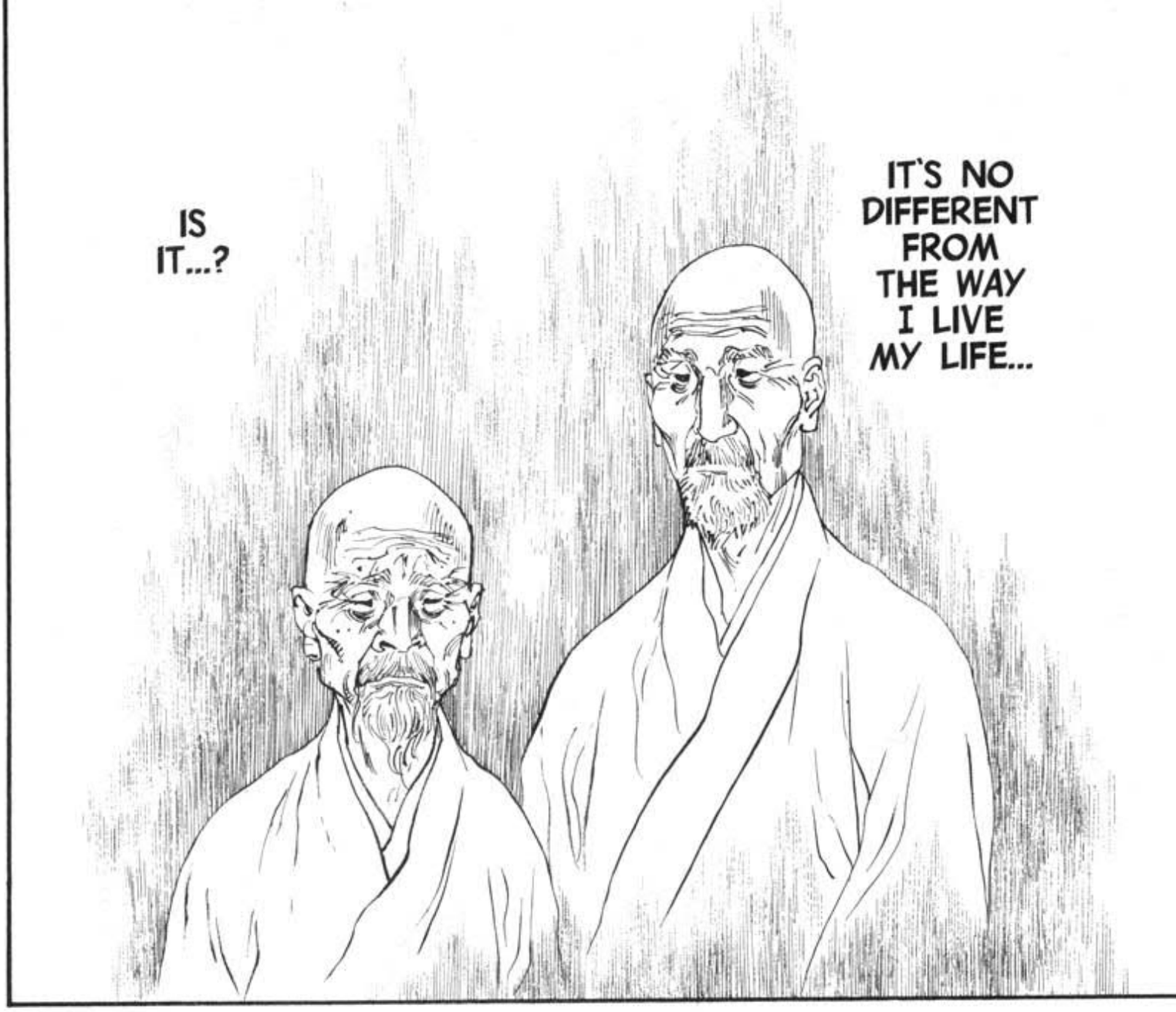
THWAK
HUF
HUF
HUF
WHUDD

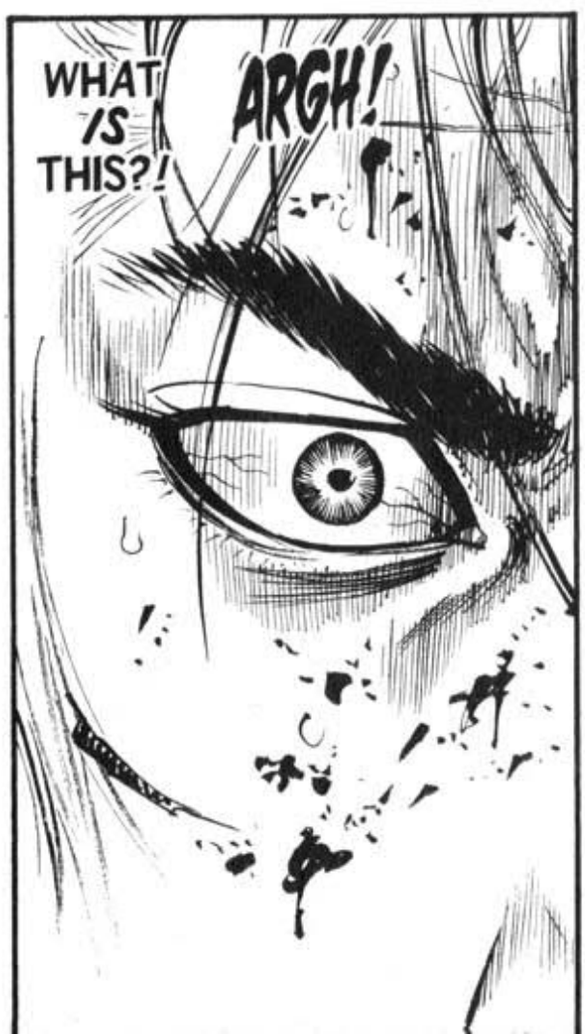
HUF
HUF
I KILL...
...AND KILL...
HUF
HUF

ATTACK!
!!
NOW!

TUNK

WAIT...
THIS IS NO
DIFFERENT...
NO MATTER
HOW MANY OF
THEM I CUT
DOWN, THEY
KEEP COMING
AT ME.


IS IT...?
IT'S NO DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY I LIVE MY LIFE...


WHAT IS THIS?!
ARGH!

HEH
HEH
HRMPH
HEH

...!!
DON'T STOP THE FLOW.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
DON'T STOP IT...

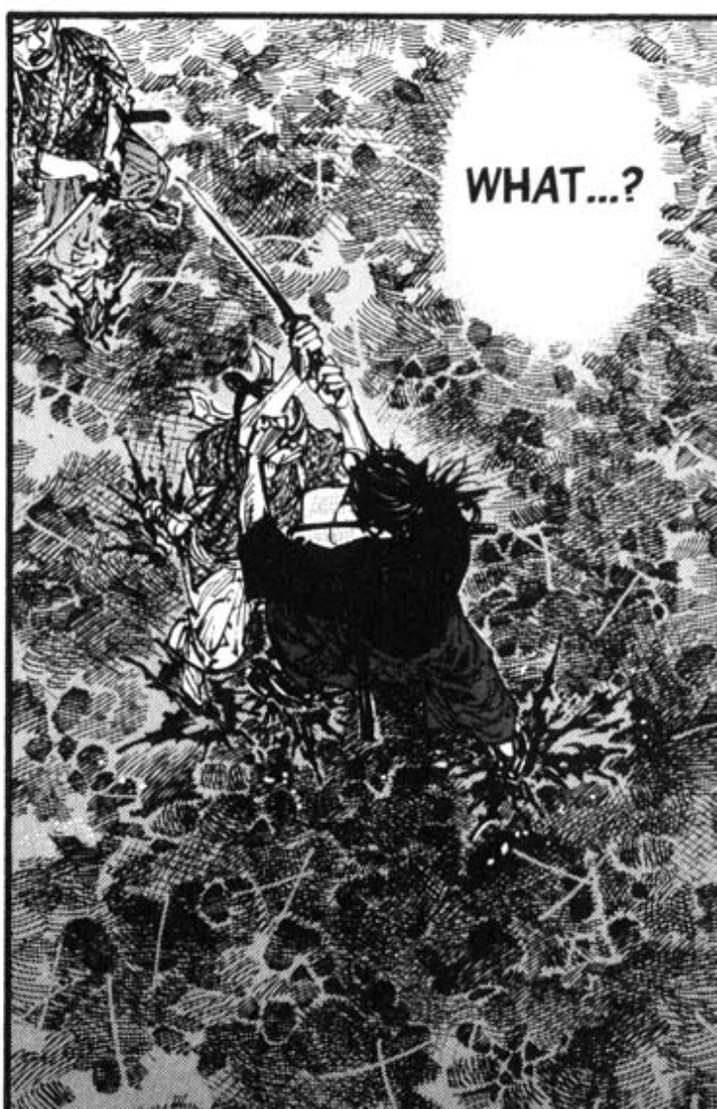
WHY CONTINUE TO CREATE THIS HEAP OF CORPSES...?
WHAT IN THE WORLD AM I THINKING ...?
.....

HUH
?!

CREATE
CORPSES--
THAT'S AN
ODD WAY
TO PUT
IT...

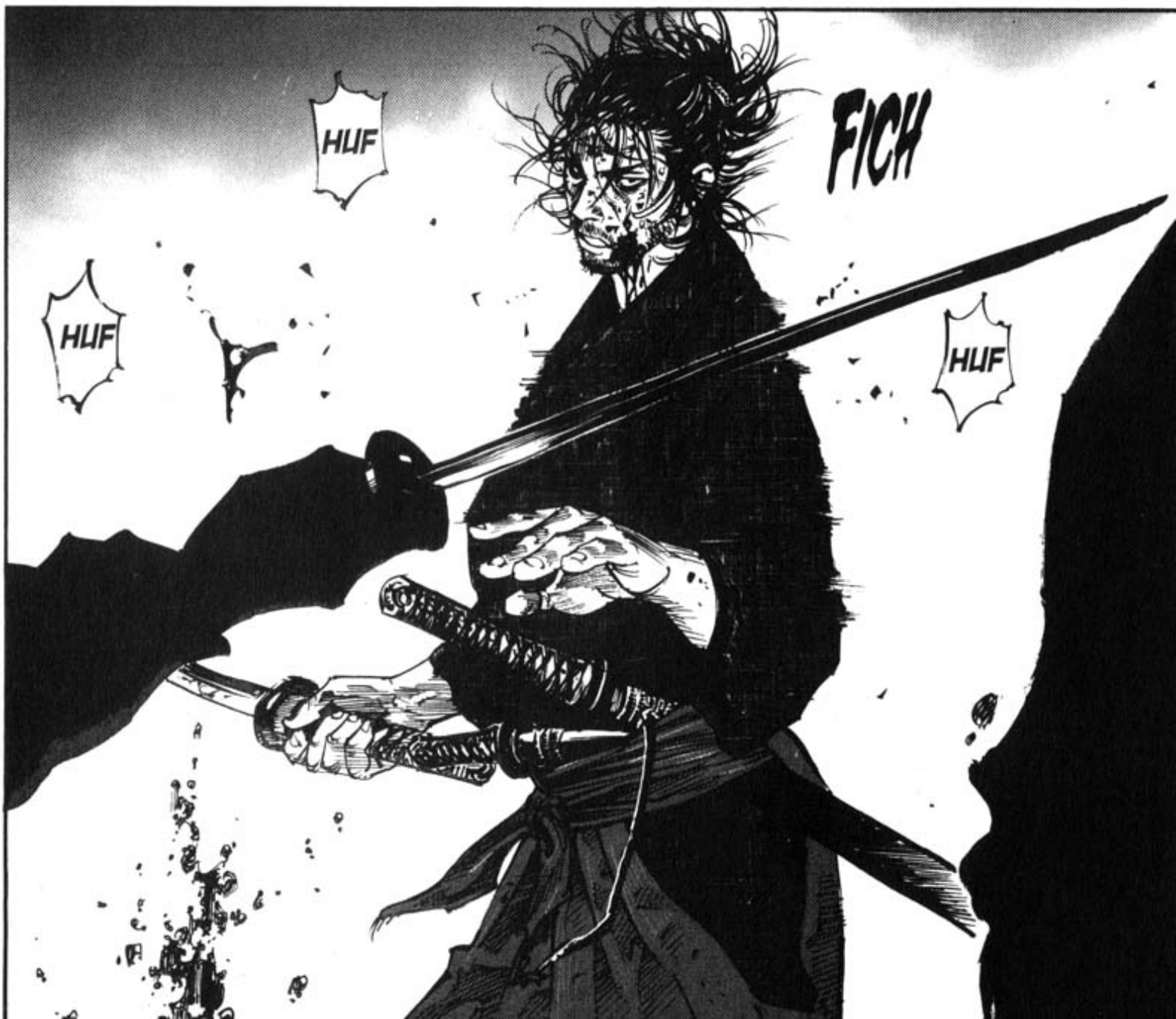
HEY...

WHAT
JUST
HAPPENED
?


WHAT...?

!
THWAK
GRAHH !!
...
CHOMP
URGH ...
GRAB
HUF
HUF

THO
KK

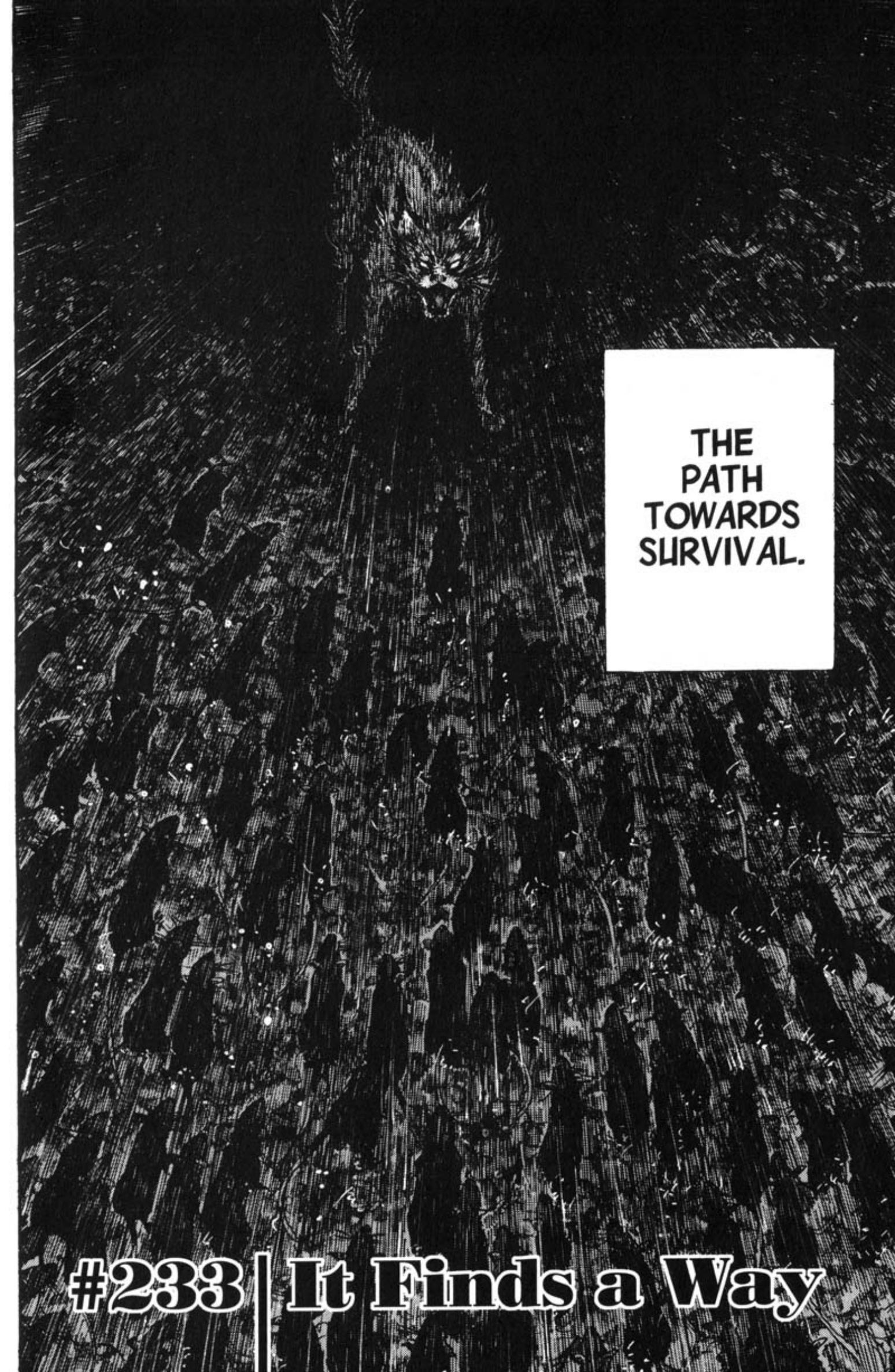

HUF
HUF
FICH
HUF

Vagabond

(EXHAUSTED, YOU MUST BE.)

I CAN'T WATCH MY FELLOW SWORDS-MEN DIE LIKE THIS.
ARE YOU GOING TO RUN AWAY?!
IT'S NO USE. IT'S OVER.
WE'VE LOST SO MANY...
WHAT'RE YOU SAYING ?!
LIFE WILL FIND A PATH...
...
B-BECAUSE I'M JUST TOO ANGRY!
THEN LET'S QUIT.
DAMN IT, I'M SCARED TOO...
WHY NOT ?!
...BUT I WON'T RUN.

EVERYONE, RUSH HIM ALL AT ONCE!
HE MAY BE STRONG, BUT HE'S ONLY A SINGLE MAN.
MADE OF FLESH AND BLOOD.
OKAY, NO MORE SECOND THOUGHTS!
LIFE FINDS ITS WAY A PATH...
WE'RE PREPARED TO DIE...!!
HUF
HUF



#233 | It Finds a Way

HIS OWN SWORDS ARE SHEATHED AT HIS SIDE, AND HE'S WIELDING ONE HE JUST PICKED UP.
FICH
LOOK AT MUSASHI!
!
FICH
YOICHI SENSEI!

!!
DON'T BE FORCED TO GO ON THE DEFENSIVE.
DON'T STOP THE FLOW.

YAHH!!
THIS IS IT!
SWARM HIM ALL AT ONCE!

!
HUF
HUF

THWAK
!!
FICH.
FWP

AHH!
...

HAK!

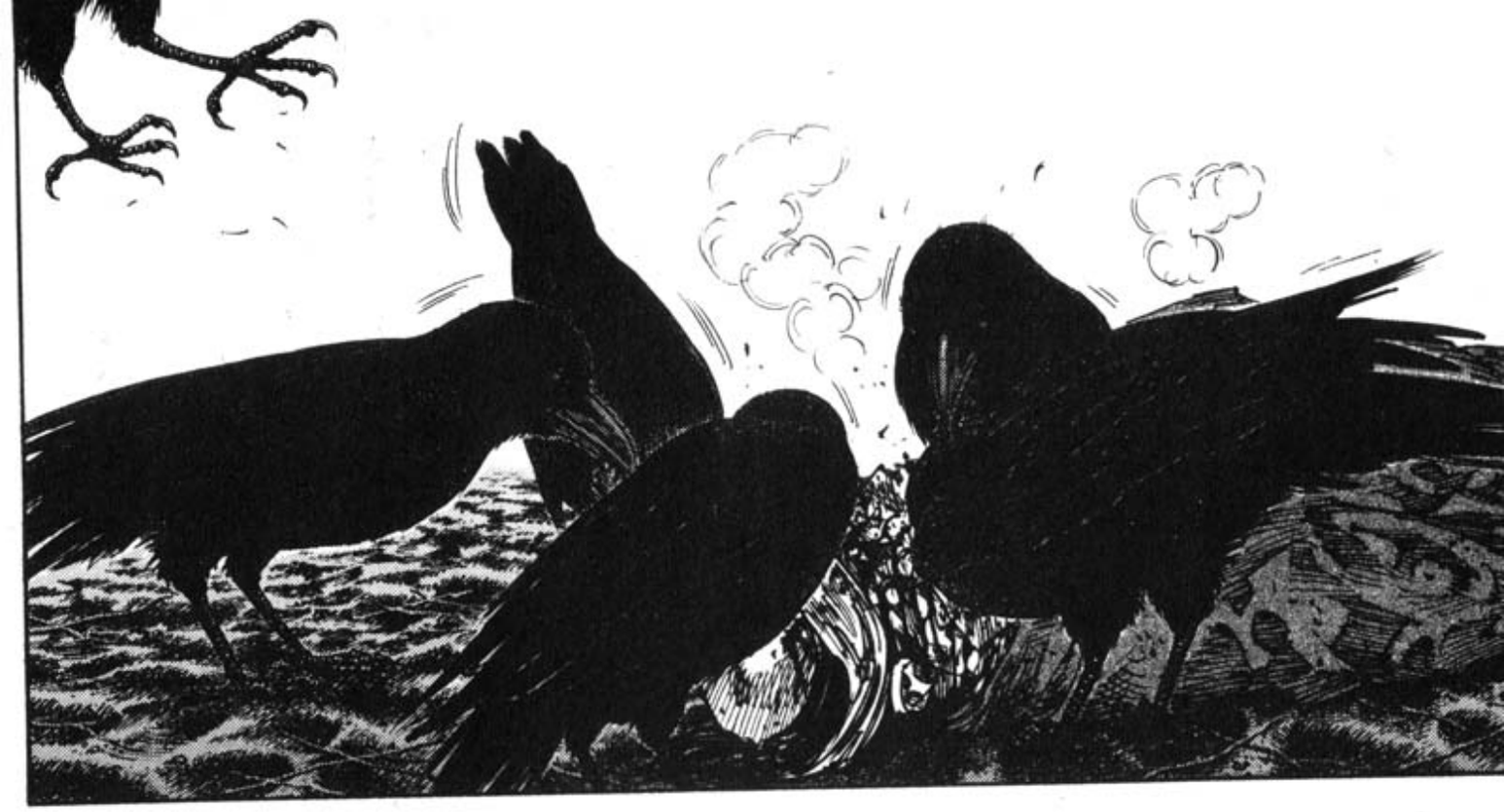
KLAKK

GAH!
!
IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO FIGHT HIM ON MY OWN!
HUF
HUF
AMAZING!
FWSH
A CHANGE OF TACTICS. THEYRE NO LONGER TRYING TO FINISH ME OFF WITH ONE BLOW.
HUF
HUF
HUF
EYES... EARS... FEET? WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING?

IT'S NO LONGER 70 SUCCESSIVE MATCHES.
AIM FOR HIS EYES! HIS EYES!

FICH
GO!

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF



MASTER UEDA?!
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

...

UGH!

...NO.
A SINGLE STAB TO THE THROAT...
WHO IS THAT...?

...!!

HUF
HUF

URAH!
HEY!

...

WATER
...
GIVE ME SOME OF THAT...
...!

...

HE CAN'T WAIT TO GET AT ME.
LOOK AT THIS CROW.

I CAN'T DIE JUST YET, THOUGH.
PUFF

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Critically acclaimed, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts Award for manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka Award for best manga, and in 2003, Inoue was nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for best writer/artist. While *VAGABOND* continues its epic run in Japan, Inoue is simultaneously pushing the bounds of manga narrative with *REAL*—a heavy-hitting manga about wheelchair basketball. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords simultaneously—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this manga are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Sasaki Kojiro (dates unknown)
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi, Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

Shinmen Takezo
Miyamoto Musashi's boyhood name.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed the *ometsuke*–responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND,* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons, who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

A Brief Historical Overview
The *Sengoku* (warring states) period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weak and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating a federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its 5-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years. The political stability that resulted put mass numbers of samurai out of work. Masterless samurai, known as *ronin*, were forced to wander the land to seek out employment. This, the beginning of the Edo Period (1600-1868), set the stage for many of the period dramas and *chambara* sword-fighting films that have popularized the image of the samurai to a Western audience.

Hon'ami Koetsu (1558-1637)
Famed artist and calligrapher who co-founded an influential arts movement called the Rinpa School. Koetsu was involved in numerous fields including tea ceremony, pottery, and calligraphy. In addition, Koetsu succeeded the line of his family's ancestral business of sword polishing and appraisals.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple, which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Winner of the 2000 Media Arts Festival Award
Recipient of the 2000 Kodansha Award for Best Manga
Winner of the 2002 Tezuka Osamu Cultural Award
Nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for Best Writer/Artist

"...reads like an Akira Kurosawa film captured on the printed page."
—Cliff Biggers, *Comics Buyer's Guide*

"...an extremely satisfying comics experience."
—Tony Isabella, *Comics Buyer's Guide*

"This really is one of the best comics currently being produced."
—Greg McElhatton, icomics.com

Striving for enlightenment by way of the sword, Miyamoto Musashi is prepared to cut down anyone who stands in his way. *Vagabond* depicts the life and times of the most celebrated samurai of all time!

Musashi defeats the two masters of the mighty Yoshioka, the most renowned school of swordsmanship in Kyoto. But now with the entire clan out for revenge, will Musashi be forced to hack and chop his way through seventy bloodthirsty men, or will he leap right into their fold?

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